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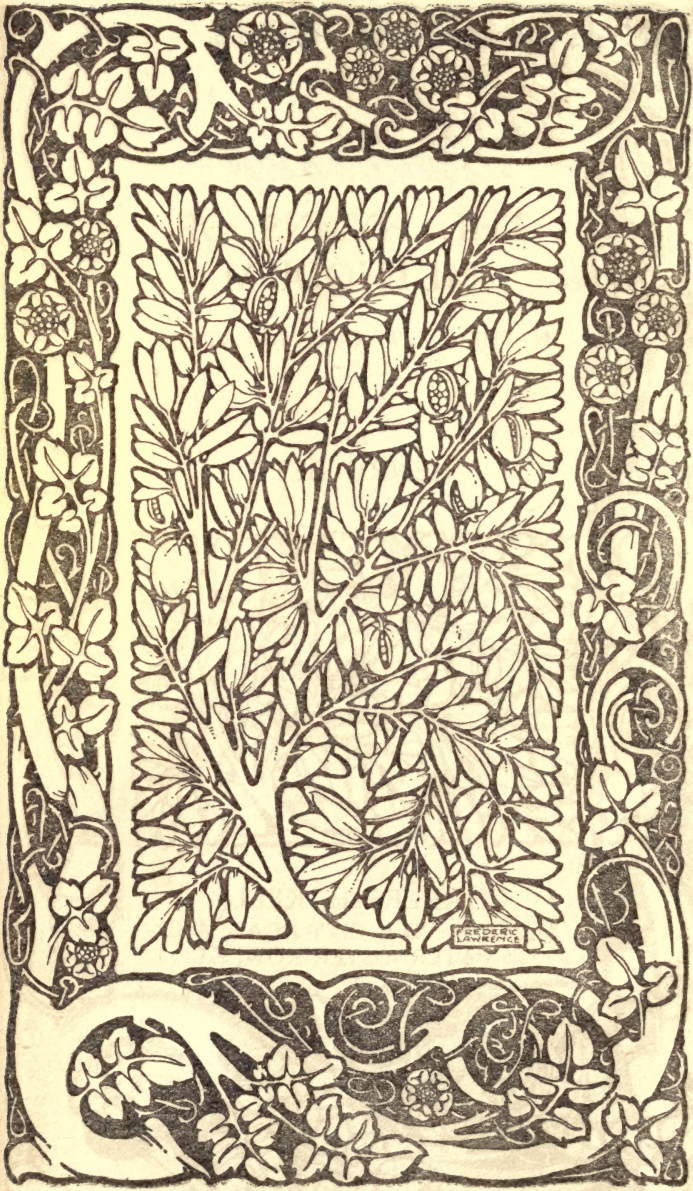
HENRY BETT

EMMANUEL



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FREDERIC
LAWRENCE

THE HYMNS OF METHODISM

IN THEIR LITERARY RELATIONS

BY
HENRY BETT



CHARLES H. KELLY
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EMMANUEL

TO

MY WIFE

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PREFACE

THE only considerable and competent work that has ever been done, so far as I am aware, upon the subject dealt with in the following pages, is contained in some papers which appeared in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* more than forty years ago, by the late Rev. John Wesley Thomas, the distinguished translator of Dante, and in some contributions to the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society in recent years by the late Mr. Charles Lawrence Ford, B.A. I have consulted these, but it is only fair to myself to say that more than nine-tenths of the references given in the book are the result of my own reading.

About a fourth of the matter contained in this volume has appeared in the pages of the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, the *Methodist Recorder*, and the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society. I make grateful acknowledgements to the Editors of these publications.

HENRY BETT.

Lincoln, 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

I

THE METHODIST HYMNS AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

It was remarked by Archbishop Trench that the greatest hymn of the Middle Ages owes much of its modern recognition to the use that Goethe made of it in *Faust*. It was this circumstance which 'helped to bring it to the knowledge of some who would not otherwise have known it; or if they had, would not have believed its worth, but that the sage and seer of this world had thus stood sponsor to it, and set his seal of recognition upon it.'[1] It would appear that the literary world is waiting for some such warranty before it realizes that in the early hymns of Methodism we possess a unique literature of devotion. The rare quality, literary and spiritual, of the hymns of the Wesleys has passed almost unrecognized for more than a hundred and fifty years, except among Methodists.

Literary Recognition

[1] *Sacred Latin Poetry*, p. 273.

There is a perverse tradition among men of letters that Methodism has no literature. Leslie Stephen contrasted the literary result of the Oxford Movement and of the Evangelical Revival, and deplored, in the latter, ' the absence of any literature possessing more than a purely historical interest.'[1] This is one of the most amazing judgements to which a critic ever committed himself. It is surely beyond question, for those who know both books, that John Wesley's *Journal* is in its way as absolutely literature as Newman's *Apologia*, and what a gulf there is between the pale, ecclesiastical verse of Keble and the lyrical raptures of Charles Wesley !

The mere fact is that the hymns of Methodism constitute the finest body of devotional verse in the language, and that the very best of them belong to the exalted region of the *Dies irae, dies illa* of Thomas of Celano, and the *Jesu dulcis memoria* of St. Bernard.

The extraordinary fecundity of Charles Wesley as a writer of religious verse has certainly obscured our sense of the literary value of what he wrote. No poet can maintain the highest level throughout a dozen volumes. In the thousands of hymns he wrote there are inevitably many that are mere versification of evangelical commonplace. But the general quality

[1] *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. xii., p. 101.

of the style is remarkably high, and scattered through this mass of work there are many scores of hymns, at the least, that are of the very highest order. The best work of Charles Wesley abides for the universal Church in the *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists* of 1780—an anthology, selected mainly from the vast mass of his brother's work by John Wesley—of which so unprejudiced a critic as Dr. Martineau declared that it was 'after the Scriptures, the grandest instrument of popular religious culture that Christendom has ever produced.'[1]

Early Methodism and Literature

The writings of the early Methodists mark an epoch in English literature. The early eighteenth century was a period when almost every writer was chilled into conventionality by a false classicism. Addison represented the perfection of English prose. And, as De Quincey once declared, in a very discerning paragraph, 'Addison, in particular, shrank from every bold and every profound expression as from an offence against good taste. He dared not for his life have used the word "passion" except in the vulgar sense of an angry paroxysm. He durst as soon have danced a hornpipe on the top of the Monument as have talked of "rapturous emotion." What *would* he have said? Why, "sentiments that were of a nature to prove

[1] In a letter to Miss Winkworth.

agreeable after an unusual rate.'' [1] The writings of the early Methodists marked the first return to simplicity and sincerity in prose. It was Edward FitzGerald who was the first to point this out, with characteristic insight and independence of judgement. 'Another book I have had is Wesley's *Journal*,' he wrote to Professor Cowell. 'If you don't know it, *do* know it; it is curious to think of this Diary of his running almost coevally with Walpole's Letter-Diary, the two men born and dying too within a few years of one another, and with such different lives to record. And it is remarkable to read pure, unaffected, and undying English, while Addison and Johnson are tainted with a style which all the world imitated!'

The Methodist Hymns a Lyrical Prelude

And as in the prose, so in the poetry of the age. Appearing at the very time when English poetry was most stilted and sterile, the hymns of Methodism became the prelude of a lyrical revival. Wordsworth remarked that, with one or two negligible exceptions, 'the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of *Paradise Lost* and *The Seasons* does not contain a single new image of external nature, and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him

[1] Works xi., p. 21 (1890).

to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination.'[1] It would be equally true to say that for a similar period, beginning and ending a little later, say, from the death of Henry Vaughan to the youth of Robert Burns, the lyrical note was never heard in these lands. Poetry had ceased to be 'simple, sensuous, and passionate.' Fire and fervour, the sense of wonder, the arresting note of reality, had all gone. Lyrical sincerity and spontaneity reappear first of all in the hymns of Methodism. We hear again the authentic note of passion, and it betokens much for English poetry in the days to come. A single example will serve where scores might be adduced. Think of the *verve*, the imaginative boldness, the ecstatic fervour of stanzas like these in an age when English verse was dominated by the influence of Pope—the lines were published in 1749:

I cannot see Thy face, and live,
 Then let me see Thy face, and die!
Now, Lord, my gasping spirit receive;
 Give me on eagle's wings to fly,
With eagle's eyes on Thee to gaze,
And plunge into the glorious blaze!

The fullness of my great reward
 A blest eternity shall be,
But hast Thou not on earth prepared
 Some better thing than this for me?
What, but one drop! one transient sight!
I want a sun, a sea of light.

[1] Essay, Supplementary to the Preface of the Poems.

II

THE SOURCE AND DATE OF THE EARLIEST METHODIST HYMNS

John Wesley's Earliest Translations

The earliest of the hymns of Methodism were written during John Wesley's residence in America. One of the most interesting passages in the first volume of the Standard Edition of Wesley's *Journal* is that in which we are given a page from Wesley's Diary for 1736, containing the text of four of his hymns. Hitherto the only knowledge we have had as to any hymn written in that year has been the reference in the *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, where Wesley wrote: 'We embarked for America in the latter end of 1735. It was the next year, while I was at Savannah, that I wrote the following lines:

> Is there a thing beneath the sun
> That strives with Thee my heart to share?
> Ah! tear it thence, and reign alone,
> The Lord of every motion there!'

It was in 1736, therefore, that he made his great version of Tersteegen's *Verborgne Gottes Liebe du*, 'Thou hidden love of God, whose height,' which Emerson declared to be the greatest hymn in the language. Now we have to add the four hymns from the Diary for that year. 'We

do not know the date of the writing,' remarks Mr. Curnock, 'but it must have been some weeks earlier than December, 1736.' These five hymns are the earliest of the hymns of Methodism: they are all translations from the German, they are all the work of *John* Wesley, and they all date from the first year of his sojourn in Georgia. Not only are these the first hymns of which we have any knowledge, but it is almost certain that they are the very first that John Wesley ever wrote. He began to learn German at the beginning of the voyage, on October 17, 1735, and the Diary for 1736 has many entries such as 'German,' 'verses,' 'translated German,' 'made verses.' These entries, which show that he was working at German hymns, begin in May, 1736, and these hymns date from the next few months. The hymns in the Diary (except the first) have numbers attached—a valuable detail—and three of the four were previously known to be translations from Freylinghausen, Richter, and Zinzendorf. The fourth had never been published before, and there was some doubt as to whether it was a translation or an original hymn of Wesley's, until the present writer discovered, in searching through Knapp's *Evangelischer Liederschatz*, that it was a version of Paul Gerhardt's *Ich singe dir mit Herz und Mund.* The first lines of these hymns, and the numbers, as given in the Diary, are as follows:

'O Jesu, Source of calm repose.'
124 'My soul before Thee prostrate lies.'
215 'Jesu, to Thee my heart I bow.'
306 'To Thee with heart and mouth I sing.'

Mr. Curnock suggested in a note that these numbers prefixed to the hymns might possibly give a clue to the 'original source whence they were drawn before translation.'

The German Source

Some time ago, the writer became the happy possessor of a copy of the 1737 edition of *Das Gesang-Buch der Gemeine in Herrn-Huth*—the hymnal of the Moravians at Herrnhut. This, except for a few corrections and an appendix, is an exact reprint of the first edition of 1735. On looking for the originals of the hymns in the Diary, it appeared that the numbers were the numbers of the pages in this book. On p. 724 (the printed number, 124, is a very natural mistake, due to Wesley's faded writing) is *Hier legt mein Sinn sich vor dir nieder*, on p. 215 *Reiner Bräut'gam meiner Seele*, and on p. 306 *Ich singe dir mit Herz und Mund.*

There are no tunes in the Herrnhut *Gesangbuch*, but the names of familiar chorales are put at the head of some of the hymns, and at the beginning of the book there is a table in which the hymns are grouped according to metre, some of the sections having an asterisked number at their head. This number, as the preface explains, refers to the page of the Halle *Gesangbuch* where

a suitable melody may be found. What is meant by the Halle *Gesangbuch* is evidently Freylinghausen's hymnal, the accepted collection of the Pietists, whose head quarters were at Halle. In the Library of Richmond College are Wesley's copies of the Herrnhut *Gesangbuch* and of Freylinghausen's *Gesangbuch*. We now know that Wesley had both books in his possession in Georgia in 1736, or, at any rate, had access to them there, for under the date, Sunday, November 21, in that year, there is an entry in his Diary: 'Freylinghausen's *Gesangbuch* with Delamotte,' and the numbered hymns in the Diary prove that he used the Herrnhut *Gesangbuch* then. Most of those who were aware that Wesley possessed both books seem to have thought that these were merely two different hymnals, without any special relation, and it has been suggested that he drew upon each of them for his translations. But the unquestionable fact is that his copy of Freylinghausen's *Gesangbuch* was Wesley's *tune-book*: it was simply the musical companion of the Herrnhut hymnal. There remains no possible doubt about this. All the thirty-three hymns that Wesley translated are found in the Herrnhut *Gesangbuch*, many of them are found nowhere else, and—as we have seen —where he attached a number it was that of the page in this book, despite the fact that two of the three numbered hymns are found in Freylinghausen also. It is plain that he did not use

Freylinghausen for the hymns which the book contained, but merely for the tunes.

Seven of the hymns that Wesley translated are by Zinzendorf; four by Gerhardt; four by Scheffler; two by Tersteegen; two by Freylinghausen; two by C. F. Richter; one each by Ernst Lange, Joachim Lange, W. C. Dessler, J. J. Winckler, J. A. Rothe, Anna Dober, Maria Böhmer, Gottfried Arnold, Sigismund Gmelin, L. A. Gotter, and A. G. Spangenberg; and one is a cento from four hymns by Zinzendorf, Johann Nitschmann, and Anna Nitschmann.[1]

Pietists and Moravians

It should be noted that the bulk of these writers are Pietists and Moravians. Freylinghausen (1670–1739) was the son-in-law and successor of A. H. Francke, the founder of the Orphan House at Halle. C. F. Richter (1676–1711) was the physician of the Orphan House. Joachim Lange (1670–1744) was Professor of Divinity at Halle. J. J. Winckler (1670–1722) was a Pietist clergyman. Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), a distinguished ecclesiastical historian, was a disciple of Spener, the founder of Pietism. Ludwig Andreas Gotter (1661–1735), who was Hofrat at Gotha, had relations with Pietism. Sigismund Christian Gmelin (1679–1707) was a Separatist who had a variegated career, but was in touch with

[1] See Appendix I. for a complete list of the German hymns and their writers.

Pietists all his life. Maria Magdalena Böhmer (167?–1743) was a Pietist who contributed three hymns to Freylinghausen's collection.

Then, in addition to Zinzendorf, there are three other Moravians whose hymns Wesley translated. J. A. Rothe (1688–175) was appointed by the Count to the pastorate of Berthelsdorf, the parish in which Herrnhut was situated, Anna Dober (1713–39) (*née* Schindler) was the wife of Leonhard J. Dober, one of the bishops of the Brethren, and A. G. Spangenberg (1704–1792), who had been Assistant Professor of Divinity at Halle, was the most learned and lovable of the Moravians, and became also one of their bishops.

Thus, excepting the classical hymns of Gerhardt (1607–1676), Scheffler (1624–1677), and Tersteegen (1697–1769), practically all the rest of the hymns that Wesley translated were the product of the two great and closely related spiritual movements that had their head quarters at Halle and at Herrnhut.

The translations from the German were all published between 1737 and 1742. They were probably all written by 1739.

Apparently Wesley disused German after his breach with the Moravians in 1740. In November, 1745, when many German troops were encamped on the Town Moor at Newcastle-on-Tyne, in consequence of the Rebellion, he wrote in his *Journal* : 'I observed many Germans standing

disconsolate at the skirts of the congregation. To these I was constrained (though I had discontinued it so long) to speak a few words in their own language. Immediately they gathered up close together, and drank in every word.' This, of course, refers to disuse of the spoken language, but it is significant that no German books are mentioned in the *Journal* after the earliest period, while French books are often referred to. Yet, on the other hand, he read Bengel's *Erklärte Offenbarung Johannis* as late as 1754, for use in his *Notes on the New Testament.* It is probable, however, that this was merely a case of furbishing up his German to read a book of which he was in special need. In his knowledge of German, as in so much else, Wesley was a pioneer. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century, at the time when the fame of Goethe and Schiller was filtering through into England, that Englishmen began to regard German as a language worth learning. It would be possible to count on the fingers of one hand the distinguished Englishmen who knew German in 1740.

John Wesley and the German Language

John Wesley's versions of German hymns are amongst the very finest examples of translated verse in the language. They stand the supreme test of a translator's art, for they are as vigorous and as poetical as the originals. They read as if they

Translated Hymns

had been written in English. His own standard of translation varied. Sometimes his version is as literal as it could be, to retain freedom of poetical movement, as, for example, in the stanza:

O Love, Thou bottomless abyss!
My sins are swallowed up in Thee.
Covered is my unrighteousness,
Nor spot of guilt remains on me,
While Jesu's blood, through earth and skies
Mercy, free, boundless mercy, cries!

which renders the German verse:

O Abgrund, welcher alle Sünden
Durch Christi Tod verschlungen hat!
Das heisst die Wunde recht verbinden,
Da findet kein Verdammen statt,
Weil Christi Blut beständig schreit,
Barmherzigkeit! Barmherzigkeit!

In other hymns, again, the English does little more than express the central thought of the German, as in the lines:

Through Thy rich grace, in Jesu's blood
Blessing, redemption, life we find.
Our souls washed in this cleansing flood,
No stain of guilt remains behind.
Who can Thy mercy's stores express?
Unfathomable, numberless!

which are a version of the German stanza:

Du segnest uns in ihm, dem Herrn,
Mit überschwenglich reichem Segen,
Und gehest unser Armut gern
Mit deiner theurern Gnad' entgegen,
Was sind wir doch, du allerschönstes Gut,
Dass deine Lieb' so Grosses an uns thut?

John Wesley learned some Spanish while in Georgia, in order to minister to a few Spanish Jews who were in the colony. He translated one Spanish hymn, 'O God, my God, my all Thou art!'—a fine version of Psalm lxiii. The Spanish source has never been traced.

Charles Wesley's Earliest Hymns

The earliest of Charles Wesley's hymns appear to have been those entitled 'A Hymn for Midnight' ('While midnight shades the earth o'erspread'), 'Written in the Beginning of a Recovery from Sickness' ('Peace, fluttering soul! the storm is o'er'), and 'After a Recovery from Sickness' ('And live I yet by power divine?'). The first of these probably dates from the early months of 1738; the others were certainly written during that period. But the real beginning of Charles Wesley's work as the poet of Methodism came with the wonderful experience of May 21, 1738. Immediately thereafter he wrote three hymns which have a new accent. 'Where shall my wondering soul begin?' is almost certainly the hymn referred to in the entry in his *Journal* for May 24, 'Toward ten my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, "I believe!" We sang the hymn with great joy.' 'And can it be that I should gain' is coloured throughout by reminiscences of a passage in Luther's *Galatians* that he had read on May 17. 'What morn on thee with sweeter ray' is entitled

'Congratulations to a Friend on believing in Christ,' and was unquestionably addressed to his brother at this time.

These hymns, the firstfruits of Charles Wesley's genius, were all first published in the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1739. From that year onward his hymns appeared in a stream of publications that only ceased in 1785—three years before his death.

CHAPTER I

THE SCRIPTURES

ἀπὸ βρέφους τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα οἶδας

'In the year 1729,' wrote John Wesley, 'I began not only to *read* but to *study* the Bible.' The results of that devoted study of the Word of God are to be seen in every page that he wrote. Both the brothers must have had a most profound, exact, and extensive acquaintance with the Scriptures. Indeed, it is only a close study of the Bible on our own part that can reveal to us the extent of their intimacy with it. There can hardly be a single paragraph anywhere in the Scriptures that is not somewhere reflected in the writings of the Wesleys. The hymns, in many cases, are a mere mosaic of biblical allusions. Here is a stanza—and many others would have served equally well—where there is a distinct quotation of Scripture in every line:

Many Allusions to Scripture

> Behold the servant of the Lord!
> I wait Thy guiding eye to feel,
> To hear and keep Thy every word,
> To prove and do Thy perfect will;
> Joyful from my own works to cease,
> Glad to fulfil all righteousness.

These six lines recall the following six passages in the Authorized Version:

'And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord' (Luke i. 38).

'I will guide thee with Mine eye' (Ps. xxxii. 8).

'If a man love Me he will keep My words' (John xiv. 23).

'That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God' (Rom. xii. 2).

'For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His' (Heb. iv. 10).

'For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness' (Matt. iii. 15).

But the most interesting points with regard to the Wesleys and the Authorized Version are naturally their many divergencies from it. They often used, and sometimes deliberately preferred to use, the older version of the Psalms (substantially Coverdale's) which is retained in the Book of Common Prayer. As devout Churchmen they had been familiar with this from childhood, and in many cases their use of it was doubtless merely casual. But there are other instances in which they remembered both versions, and combined or contrasted them.

The Prayer-Book Psalter

Much of Charles Wesley's language and thought was coloured by renderings in this version. Thus the words of Ps. xxvii. 16 'O tarry thou

the Lord's leisure,' are recalled in many of his verses:

> Fainting soul, be bold, be strong,
> *Wait the leisure of thy Lord;*
> Though it seem to tarry long,
> True and faithful is His word.

And the language of Ps. xlv. 4, 'Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most Mighty, according to Thy worship and renown,' is closely paraphrased in another hymn:

> *Gird on Thy thigh the Spirit's sword,*
> And take to Thee Thy power divine;
> Stir up Thy strength, Almighty Lord,
> All power and majesty are Thine;
> *Assert Thy worship and renown;*
> O all-redeeming God, come down!

In a poetical paraphrase of Ps. lxxxiv., both versions of the eleventh verse are utilized, 'For the Lord God is a light and a defence' (P.B.V.), 'For the Lord God is a sun and shield' (A.V.):

> *God is a sun and shield,*
> *A light and a defence,*
> With gifts His hands are filled,
> We draw our blessings thence.

The earlier version of Ps. xcix. 1, 'The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient,' is remembered in the opening verse of a hymn—

> *The Lord is King,* and earth submits,
> *Howe'er impatient,* to His sway,
> Between the cherubim He sits,
> And makes His restless foes obey.

So a clause from Ps. cxxxix. 23, 'Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart,' is remembered in another hymn—

Try us, O God, and search the ground
Of every sinful heart!
Whate'er of sin in us is found,
O bid it all depart!

Many other examples might be quoted. There is one, however, of unusual interest. In Ps. lxxiv. 12, where the Authorized Version with the Hebrew, Septuagint, and Vulgate, has 'For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth,' the Prayer-Book Version renders 'For God is my King of old; the help that is done upon earth, He doeth it Himself.' This is following Luther, '*der alle Hilfe thut, so auf Erden geschieht*,' and the Zurich Bible, '*du der alles heyl und hilff* (*das in der gantzen welt geschieht*) *allein thust*.'

It is reproduced in one of the hymns:

A feeble thing of nought,
With lowly shame I own
The help that upon earth is wrought
Thou dost it all alone.

John Wesley emphatically preferred this rendering. He wrote in his *Journal*, under the date October 14, 1785, 'I preached in the evening in the old Temple Church, on Ps. lxxiv. 12. In the old translation it runs, "The help that is done upon earth, God doeth it Himself." A

glorious and important truth! In the new, "Working salvation in the midst of the earth." What a wonderful emendation! Many such emendations there are in this translation; one would think King James had made them himself.' In another passage in the *Journal*, a year and a half later, April 22, 1787, he refers to the text and translation again: 'I opened and applied that glorious text, "The help that is done upon earth, He doeth it Himself." Is it not strange that this text, Ps. lxxiv. 12, is vanished out of the new translation of the Psalms?'

Notwithstanding Wesley's uncritical scorn of the 'emendation,' it is the only correct rendering. He was very old, and very busy, or a glance at his Hebrew Bible would have shown him that the Authorized Version was unquestionably right.

John Wesley's Revision of the New Testament

In the *Notes on the New Testament* Wesley freely revised the Authorized Version. And it has never yet been sufficiently recognized that in this (as in so much else) he was wonderfully ahead of his age. Wesley's version, issued in 1754, was a marvellous anticipation of the Revised Version of a hundred and thirty years later. We have tested three chapters, chosen haphazard, and find that in these chapters Wesley introduced sixty-one changes into the text. Out of these sixty-one

changes he anticipated the reading of the Revised Version in thirty-two cases. Moreover, it is nearly always in the more serious alterations that the Revisers agree with him. There must be in the whole New Testament, say, 3,000 changes in the text of the Authorized Version, in which Wesley anticipated the Revisers of 1881. And he anticipated them in the arrangement of the text into paragraphs.

The Wesleys and the Greek Testament

Behind all this there was, of course, an intimate knowledge of the Greek Testament. John Wesley was Greek Lecturer at Lincoln College, and that did not mean that he had to do with Hellenic studies (as some who have written about it have assumed), but that he lectured on the Greek Testament. One of the early Methodist preachers recorded that Wesley could always remember the Greek of a passage in the New Testament, even when he was at a loss for the exact language of the Authorized Version. And Charles Wesley, like his brother, had a devout scholar's knowledge of the New Testament in the original.[1]

This intimacy with the Greek Testament appears in many delightful ways in their writings, as well as in the revised text given in the *Notes on the New Testament*. Naturally it is most

[1] Dr. Adam Clarke says that John Wesley used the *O mirificam* edition of the Greek Testament, printed by Stephens, at Paris, in 1546.

easily discerned where the Authorized Version is defective. Many scores of examples might be quoted.

Mistranslations in the Authorized Version

There are a few absolute mistranslations in the Authorized Version. One of the worst is in Phil. ii. 7, where 'made Himself of no reputation' represents the Greek ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε '*emptied* Himself.' The translators of 1611 were apparently afraid of the Apostle's bold and simple word. Wesley removed the futile circumlocution of the Authorized Version and gave the only possible rendering, as the Revised Version did later. Wherever the passage is referred to in the hymns, the proper equivalent of the Greek is given—

> He left His Father's throne above,
> So free, so infinite His grace!
> *Emptied Himself* of all but love,
> And bled for Adam's helpless race.

> To Thee, who from the eternal throne,
> Cam'st *emptied* of Thy glory down,
> For us to groan, to bleed, to die!

There is another passage in Philippians where the translation, inadequate to begin with, became still more unsatisfactory through the change in meaning of an English word. The Authorized Version of Phil. iii. 20 is 'For our *conversation* is in heaven.' The Greek is πολίτευμα, 'citizenship,' and the Revised Version reads accordingly, 'For

our *citizenship* is in heaven.' The poet evidently had the original in mind when he wrote—

> To me the victor's title give
> Among Thy glorious saints to live.
> And all their happiness to know,
> A *citizen* of heaven below.

Again, one of the striking defects of the Authorized Version is its strange indifference as to the presence or absence of the Greek article — a characteristic largely due to the influence of the Vulgate. The Authorized Version of 2 Tim. iv. 7 is, 'I have fought *a* good fight,' but the *Textus Receptus* is, τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλὸν '*the* good fight.' So Wesley rendered it in the *Notes*, and the force of the article is remembered in more than one hymn—

The Greek Article

> I *the* good fight have fought,
> O when shall I declare?
> The victory by my Saviour got
> I long with Paul to share.

There is only one 'good fight'—what the Apostle calls elsewhere 'the good fight of faith.'

The very next verse of Scripture furnishes another example of the same thing. The Authorized Version translates 'Henceforth there is laid up for me *a* crown of righteousness.' But the Greek is ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος '*the* crown of righteousness.' So Wesley renders it in the *Notes*. And so constantly in the hymns:

The glorious crown of righteousness
To me reached out I view,
Conqueror through Him, I soon shall seize
And wear it as my due.

Different Words in the Original

Again the Authorized Version frequently ignores that important canon of translation which ordains that different words in the original shall be rendered by different words in the version. It is well known that there are two words in the Greek Testament, both of which the Authorized Version renders 'crown,' διάδημα and στέφανος. The former is the kingly ornament, the royal crown. The word only occurs thrice, in the whole of the New Testament, and all the three instances are in the Apocalypse—the 'seven diadems' of the dragon (Rev. xii. 3), the 'ten diadems' of the beast (Rev. xiii. 1), and the 'many diadems' of Christ (Rev. xix. 12). In each case Wesley, in the *Notes*, retained the original word, as the Revisers did in 1881. One of the hymns, too, remembers the word—

And who in Christ are found,
They His *diadem* shall wear,
With life and glory crowned.

The other word, στέφανος, is much more frequent, and it is poorly represented by the English 'crown,' since it never means the badge of royalty, as the English word generally does. The significance of the word has been beautifully

defined by Archbishop Trench, in his *Synonyms of the New Testament.* 'It is the crown of victory in the games, of civic worth, of military valour, of nuptial joy, of festal gladness—woven of oak, of ivy, of parsley, of myrtle, of olive—or imitating in gold these leaves or others—of flowers, as of violets or roses, the "wreath," in fact, or the "garland," the German "Kranz" as distinguished from "Krone."' This is the word consistently used in the New Testament of the rewards of the faithful, the στέφανος of life, of glory, of righteousness. It is this which is used in Rev. ii. 10, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life,' τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς. The passage is quoted in many of the hymns, and the proper significance of the word is brought out in nearly every case.

> Be faithful unto death,
> Partake My victory,
> And thou shalt wear this glorious *wreath*,
> And thou shalt reign with Me.

And so in references to 2 Tim. iv. 8—

> The glorious *wreath* which now I see
> The Lord, the righteous Judge, on me
> Shall at that day bestow.

In John xiii. 10 the Authorized Version is, 'He that is *washed* needeth not save to *wash* his feet, but is clean every whit.' This fails to distinguish between the two Greek verbs upon

which the whole meaning of the passage turns, and which should be rendered as in the Revised Version, 'He that is *bathed* (ὁ λελουμένος) needeth not save to *wash* (νίψασθαι) his feet.' The point is remembered in a hymn—

> If *bathed* in Thine atoning blood,
> Am I not every whit made clean?
> My care is now to *wash* my feet,
> And if I humbly walk with Thee,
> Sin I need never more repeat,
> Or lose my faith and purity.

There is a remarkable example of this in regard to Heb. iv. 9, 'There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God' (A.V.). The word here translated 'rest,' σαββατισμὸς, is one which means 'a keeping of the Sabbath,' and it stands in deliberate contrast to the ordinary word 'rest,' κατάπαυσις, which occurs eight times in the immediate context. The only satisfactory translation, of course, is one which marks the difference, like that of the Revised Version, 'A promise being left of entering into His *rest* . . . For we which have believed do enter into *rest* . . . As I sware in My wrath, They shall not enter into My *rest* . . . There remaineth therefore a *sabbath-rest* for the people of God.' Now recall the lines:

> Lord, I believe a *rest* remains
> To all Thy people known,
> A *rest* where pure enjoyment reigns,
> And Thou art loved alone.

O that I now the *rest* might know,
Believe, and enter in!
Now, Saviour, now the power bestow,
And let me cease from sin.

Remove this hardness from my heart,
This unbelief remove;
To me the *rest* of faith impart,
The *sabbath* of Thy love!

In 1 Peter v. 7 two different Greek words are used where the Authorized Version would suggest the same word: 'Casting all your *care* (μέριμναν) upon Him, for He *careth* (μέλει) for you.' The first word should, of course, be rendered 'anxiety,' or 'trouble.' The point is remembered in a hymn based upon the passage—

O Lover of sinners, on Thee
My burden of *trouble* I cast,
Whose *care* and compassion for me
For ever and ever shall last.

Again, the Authorized Version did not always do justice to the vivid or unusual character of a word in the text. It rendered Phil. iv. 7, 'The peace of God . . . shall *keep* your hearts.' The Revised Version 'guard' is much better, but the Apostle's word, φρουρήσει, means 'to keep with a military guard.' It is the same word that he uses in 2 Cor. xi. 32. 'In Damascus the Governor under Aretas the King *kept-with-a-garrison* (ἐφρούρει) the city of the Damascenes, desirous to apprehend me.' Wesley remembered

Vivid or Unusual Words

this in dealing with Phil. iv. 7 in the *Notes*. His comment is 'Shall guard, as a garrison does a city.' Again the point was recollected in a hymn—

> My strength, the joy Thy smiles impart,
> Thy peace doth *garrison* my heart.

The Authorized Version of Matt. xxviii. 19 is, 'Go ye therefore, and *teach* all nations,' but the word does not here represent the usual Greek verb (which occurs in the next sentence, '*teaching* (διδάσκοντες) them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you'), but μαθητεύσατε 'make-ye-disciples-of.' This is remembered in a hymn 'At the Baptism of Adults'—

> We now Thy promised presence claim,
> Sent to *disciple* all mankind,
> Sent to baptize into Thy name,
> We now Thy promised presence find.

The Authorized Version of a phrase in Col. i. 13 is 'His dear Son,' but the Greek is literally translated by the Revised Version, 'the Son of His love.'[1] John Wesley was clearly thinking of the exact language of the Apostle when he wrote—

> *Son of Thy Sire's Eternal Love,*
> Take to Thyself Thy mighty power,
> Let all earth's sons Thy mercy prove,
> Let all Thy bleeding grace adore!

It is well known that the word in John xiv. 18,

[1] 'We are the sons of God's grace, He alone is the Son of His love.' (Dr. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching*, p. 254.)

rendered 'comfortless' in the Authorized Version, and 'desolate' in the Revised Version, is ὀρφανούς, literally, *orphans*. This is remembered in a hymn for Whit-Sunday—

> . . . *Orphans* we
> Awhile Thine absence mourn,
> But we Thy face again shall see,
> But Thou wilt soon return.

The Authorized Version renders John xvi. 33, 'But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,' and the Revised Version retains the reading. But the exact and vivid sense of ἀλλὰ θαρσεῖτε, 'But take-courage!' is conveyed in the line—

> *Courage*! your Captain cries,
> Who all your toil foreknew;
> Toil ye shall have, yet all despise,
> I have o'ercome for you.

In the lines—

> The pure in heart obtain the grace
> To see *without a veil* His face,

there are two references to Scripture, the first to Matt. v. 8, the second to 2 Cor. iii. 18, where the Authorized Version translates 'With *open* face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.' The Greek is, however, ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ 'with *unveiled* face.' So it is rendered by the Revisers, and by Wesley in the *Notes on the New Testament*.

Obviously the proper sense of ἀνακεκαλυμμένος was in the mind of the writer of the line 'To see

without a veil His face.' The rendering is specially important, because the Apostle was referring to his own words throughout the previous paragraph about the *veil* (κάλυμμα) of Moses.

There is a subtle illustration of the intimate knowledge of the Greek Testament possessed by the Wesleys in the lines—

> Jesus, confirm my heart's desire,
> To work and speak and think for Thee,
> Still let me guard the holy fire,
> And still stir up Thy gift in me.

The hymn is based upon Lev. vi. 13, 'Fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually: it shall not go out.' The text is prefaced to the hymn in the *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures.* This thought of a perpetual flame pervades the verses, and it was this which suggested the quotation of Paul's words to Timothy, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee.' There is no apparent connexion to the English reader, but there is to a student of the Greek Testament. For the word rendered 'stir up,' ἀναζωπυρεῖν—it only occurs this once in the whole of the New Testament—is a word that means (as is apparent in the very structure of it) 'to stir up *a fire*, to rekindle.' 'Literally, blowing up the coals into a flame,' as Wesley remarks in the *Notes on the New Testament.* Unquestionably, it was this remembrance

A Suggestive Word

of the original sense of ἀναζωπυρεῖν which suggested the particular form of the lines—

> Still let me guard the holy *fire*,
> And still *stir up* Thy gift in me.

Some Important Words

The important word διαθήκη is always rendered 'covenant' by John Wesley in the *Notes on the New Testament*, despite the authority of Bengel, who prefers *testamentum*. Wesley was right, for, as Farrar has said, 'διαθήκη always means "covenant"—except that in Heb. ix. 17 by a play upon words it has the meaning "will."'[1] So constantly in the hymns—

> Stablish with me *the covenant new*
> And write perfection on my heart!

Then there is the obvious preference for 'new *creation*' rather than 'new creature' as a rendering of the Apostle's phrase καινὴ κτίσις in 2 Cor. v. 17, and Gal. vi. 18, which is evidenced by several hymns—

> My soul's new *creation*, a life from the dead,
> The day of salvation, that lifts up my head.

And there is the constant use of '*bears* away' for the feebler (though legitimate) 'taketh away,' in allusions to John i. 29—

> Lamb of God, who *bear'st* away
> All the sins of all mankind!
>
> Behold the Lamb of God, who *bears*
> The sins of all the world away!

[1] *History of Interpretation*, p. 30.

Such are some of the cases in which the Wesleys anticipated later scholarship in the exact and sensitive rendering of important phrases of Scripture.

The Very Words of the Apostles

There are also several striking instances in which, while no question of accurate translation arises, the *ipsissima verba* of the New Testament writers are recalled. Such is the allusion in one of the hymns to Titus iii. 4, 'the kindness of God our Saviour, and His *love toward man*' (R.V.), where the latter phrase is a translation of one Greek word, φιλανθρωπία, our word *philanthropy*. The original text of the passage is remembered in the lines—

> When that *philanthropy* divine
> Into a sinner's heart doth shine,
> It shows the wondrous plan,
> The wisdom in a mystery
> Employed by the great One and Three,
> To save His favourite, man.

In Eph. vi. 11 and 13—'the *whole armour* of God'—the two words represent one Greek word, πανοπλία, which we have in English as *panoply*. The splendid word is remembered and used in the lines—

> Stand then in His great might,
> With all His strength endued;
> But take, to arm you for the fight,
> The *panoply* of God.

One of the books of the Apocrypha—the finest

of them all—has considerably influenced the hymns. There are numerous allusions in the verse of the Wesleys to the language of the *Wisdom of Solomon*. One of John Wesley's translations, the fine version of Scheffler's *Du unvergleichlich Gut*, combines two recollections of this book in two lines—

The 'Wisdom of Solomon'

> High throned on heaven's eternal hill,
> *In number, weight, and measure still*
> *Thou sweetly orderest all that is;*
> And yet Thou deign'st to come to me,
> And guide my steps, that I, with Thee
> Enthroned, may reign in endless bliss.

This recalls both, 'But Thou hast ordered all things in number, and measure, and weight' (*Wisdom* xi. 20), and 'Wisdom reacheth from one end to another, and mightily and sweetly doth she order all things' (*Wisdom* viii. 1). Neither reference is in the German—

> Du bist die Weisheit selbst die ewiglich regieret,
> Der tiefeste Verstand, der alles glücklich führet.

One of the most affecting titles given to our Lord in the hymns is from the same source. 'But Thou sparest all, for they are Thine, O Lord, Thou Lover of Souls' (*Wisdom* xi. 26). This is used again and again:

> Jesu, *Lover of my soul*,
> Let me to Thy bosom fly,
> While the nearer waters roll,
> While the tempest still is high.

Lover of Souls! Thou know'st to prize
What Thou hast bought so dear;
Come then, and in Thy people's eyes,
With all Thy wounds appear!

The fine rhapsody in *Wisdom* iii. 1–4: 'But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God. . . . For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality,' is remembered in the verse—

The promised land, from Pisgah's top,
I now exult to see:
My hope is full (O glorious hope!)
Of immortality.

And the noble passage in *Wisdom* xi. 24, 'For Thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which Thou hast made, for never wouldest Thou have made anything if Thou hadst hated it,' is behind the stanza—

O may I love like Thee!
In all Thy footsteps tread!
Thou hatest all iniquity,
But nothing Thou hast made.

Luther's 'Galatians'

The first allusion to any book other than the Bible in the hymns of Charles Wesley is a reminiscence, often repeated, of Luther's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*—a reference rather to the Reformer's emphasis than to his language. There is a manuscript of 1738 in the archives of the Brethren from the hand of

William Holland, one of the earliest of the English Moravians, in which he writes: 'Being providentially directed to Martin Luther's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, I carried it round to Mr. Charles Wesley, who was then sick at Mr. Bray's, as a very precious treasure that I had found.' Charles Wesley writes in his *Journal*, under the date Wednesday, May 17, 1738: 'To-day I first saw Luther on the Galatians, which Mr. Holland had accidentally lit upon. We began, and found him nobly full of faith.' On the evening of the same day he writes: 'I spent some hours this evening in private with Martin Luther, who was greatly blessed to me, especially his conclusion of the second chapter. I laboured, waited, and prayed to feel "Who loved *me*, and gave Himself *for me*."' Luther spends some beaut ful pages over these words of the Apostle, 'words full of great and mighty comfort.' He writes: 'Therefore thou shouldest so read these little words *me* and *for me*, as to meditate well upon them, and deem that they have much in them. Use thyself to lay ho d of this little word *me* with a sure faith, and apply it to thyself, and do not doubt that thou art of the number named in this little word *me*.'

Three days after Charles Wesley had first read these words, on Sunday, May 21, he found the peace of God. Luther's loving insistence upon the Apostle's words is remembered and

reflected in more than one hymn written at the time.

O Filial Deity,
 Accept my new-born cry!
See the travail of Thy soul,
 Saviour, and be satisfied:
Take me now, possess me whole,
Who *for me*, *for me* hast died!

And can it be that I should gain
 An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He *for me*, who caused His pain?
 For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should'st die *for me*?

And throughout a hymn written exactly a year later, in May, 1739, and entitled 'For the Anniversary Day of one's Conversion':

Then with my heart I first believed,
 Believed with faith divine;
Power with the Holy Ghost received
 To call the Saviour *mine*.
I felt my Lord's atoning blood
 Close to *my* soul applied;
Me, *me*, He loved—the Son of God—
 For me, *for me*, He died!

John Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament* were largely indebted to the *Gnomon* of Bengel —'that great light of the Christian world (lately gone to his reward) Bengelius,' as he is called in the preface. It is a striking proof of Wesley's scholarship and shrewdness that he should have selected as the basis of his exposition a work

which, in the language of Dr. Sanday, 'stands out among the exegetical literature not only of the eighteenth century, but of all centuries, for its masterly terseness and precision, and for its combination of spiritual insight with the best scholarship of the time.' In his notes on the Apocalypse Wesley used in addition to the *Gnomon* Bengel's German exposition of the book, the *Erklärte Offenbarung Johannis, und vielmehr Jesu Christi,* as it is quaintly entitled.

Bengel's Exposition of the Apocalypse

On Rev. ii. 17 Bengel has this beautiful note: '*A new name.* So Jacob after his victory received the new name of Israel. The word new is very characteristic of the Revelation (*ein recht apocalyptisches Wort*): a new name, a new song, a new heaven, a new earth, new Jerusalem, all things new. *Which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.* Jesus Himself had a new name, known only to Himself. Would'st thou know what the new name shall be? Overcome! Before that thou askest in vain: thereafter thou wilt soon read it, written on the white stone.' Charles Wesley assisted in compiling the *Notes*, and this comment, the last two sentences of which were translated by the elder brother, evidently impressed him; for eight years later, in the *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures*, he published a hymn which paraphrases Bengel's note:

Dost thou desire to know and see
What thy mysterious name shall be?
Contending for thy heavenly home,
Thy latest foe in death o'ercome;
Till then thou searchest out in vain
What only conquest can explain.

But when the Lord hath closed thine eyes,
And opened them in Paradise,
Receiving thy new name unknown,
Thou read'st it wrote on the white stone,
Wrote on thy pure humanity,
God, Three in One, and One in Three.

CHAPTER II

THE FATHERS, THE LITURGIES, AND THE MYSTICS

ὑπὸ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου φερόμενοι
ἐλάλησαν οἱ ἅγιοι Θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι.

THERE are many allusions in the hymns to the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Samuel Wesley the elder, in a letter to a young clergyman containing detailed advice as to his studies —a letter which John Wesley published, with a preface, many years later—declared that 'the blessed Ignatius's Epistles can never be enough read, or praised, or valued, next to the inspired writings.' And John Wesley devoted thirty pages of the first volume of the *Christian Library* to the Epistles of Ignatius. It is not surprising, therefore, that there should be several echoes of a passage in his Epistle to the Romans (vii. 2), 'Living I write unto you, but it is as loving to die. *For my Love has been crucified* (ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρως ἐσταύρωται) and there is left in me no fire of earthly love at

Ignatius

all.' The famous phrase becomes the refrain of the hymn, 'O Love Divine, what hast thou done?'—

> The immortal God for me hath died:
> My Lord, *my Love is crucified*—

and it is recalled in several other hymns. It had been previously used in an old German hymn which John Wesley is not likely to have seen, and it is quoted in one of the *Spiritual Songs* of John Mason, which was certainly known to both brothers:

> My Lord, my Love is crucified,
> He all the Pains did bear;
> But in the Sweetness of His Rest,
> He makes His Servants share.

Tertullian

Another hymn contains an echo of Tertullian—

> Though earth and hell the word gainsay
> The Word of God can never fail;
> The Lamb shall take my sins away,
> *'Tis certain, though impossible;*
> The thing impossible shall be,
> All things are possible to me.

The passage is in Tertullian's treatise *De Carne Christi*. He is arguing against Marcion, whose contention was that the humiliation implied in the fact of the Incarnation was unworthy of God. Tertullian answers this in a passage splendidly paradoxical and profoundly spiritual: 'Spare the whole world's one only hope, thou

who art destroying the indispensable dishonour of our faith. Whatever is unworthy of God is of gain to me. . . . The Son of God is born; we are not ashamed, because we ought to be ashamed. And the Son of God died; it is perfectly credible, because it is absurd. And being buried He rose again; it is certain, because it is impossible.' (Natus est Dei Filius; non pudet quia pudendum est; et mortuus est Dei Filius; prorsus credibile est quia ineptum est; et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile.) The hymn, however, merely quotes the famous phrase that is known to all the world.

A passage in Tertullian's *Apology* (c. 39), 'Look ye, say they, how these Christians seem to love one another!' is also recalled in a hymn which is probably by John Wesley—

> In them let all mankind behold
> How Christians lived in days of old;
> Mighty their envious foes to move,
> *A proverb of reproach—and love.*

Here it is hardly probable that this is a direct reference to the passage, for John Wesley wrote to his mother from Marienborn while on his journey to Herrnhut, quoting the words and attributing them to Julian the Apostate: 'Eighty-eight of them [the Moravians] praise God with one heart and one mouth at Marienborn; another little company at Runnesburg, an hour off; another at Budingen, an hour from

thence; and yet another at Frankfort. I now understand those words of poor Julian, "See how these Christians love one another!"' The phrase is quoted as proverbial in the introduction to Arndt's *True Christianity*, and in at least one other of the works included in the *Christian Library*.

'The Christians to the Lions!'

Another passage in the *Apology* is referred to in more than one hymn: 'If Tiber overflows, and Nile does not; if heaven stands still and withholds its rain, and the earth quakes; if famine or pestilence take their marches through the country, the word is, Away with these Christians to the lions!' (c. 40.)

'Away with them,' the world exclaim,
'The Christians to the lions cast!'
The stream is troubled by the lamb,
And must be so, while time shall last.

The Lamb, they say, disturbs the stream,
The world confounded is by them
Who its confusions end:
Yet still, 'Away with them,' they cry,
'The Christians burn or crucify,
Or to the lions send!'

Aesop

It is curious that both these hymns which have the allusion to Tertullian's words should also contain a reference to one of Aesop's fables, the story of the wolf who complained that the stream of which he was drinking was disturbed by a lamb

farther down—a mere pretext for devouring the alleged disturber.

It has been suggested that the lines— **Jerome**

> To damp our earthly joys,
> To increase our gracious fears,
> *For ever let the Archangel's voice*
> *Be sounding in our ears :*
> Th solemn midnight cry,
> *Ye dead, the Judge is come,*
> *Arise, and meet Him in the sky,*
> *And meet your instant doom !*

—recall a passage of Jerome : 'Quoties diem illum considero, toto corpore contremisco, sive enim comedo, sive bibo, sive aliquid aliud facio, semper videtur illa tuba terribilis sonare in auribus meis, Surgite, mortui, venite ad judicum.' (*In xvii. Johannis.*) Charles Wesley may very probably have met with the words, apart from any patristic reading, for they are quoted in the Latin in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and in English by Chaucer in the *Persones Tale* : 'For as Seint Jerome sayth : at every time that me remembreth of the day of dome, I quake : for whan I ete or drinke, or do what so I do, ever semeth me that the trompe sowneth in min eres : riseth ye up that ben ded, and cometh to the jugement.'

In John Austin's *Offices* (1668) (partly republished in the *Christian Library*) there is a hymn of which one verse runs—

O quicken, Lord, our Faith,
Of these great Joys and Fears;
And make the last Day's Trumpet be
Still sounding in our Ears.

But Charles Wesley's stanza is more than an echo of this: it carries the allusion to Jerome's language farther than Austin's lines do, to *Surgite, mortui, venite ad judicum.*

The lines in one of the hymns on heaven—

A brother dead to God,
By sin alas! undone,

—recall the famous story of St. John and the robber, told by Eusebius in the *Ecclesiastical History* (iii. 23)—a book which John Wesley records reading for the second time in November, 1741. Inquiring of a bishop in the neighbourhood of Ephesus as to the welfare of a young man whom he had previously committed to the bishop's special charge, the Apostle received the answer, 'He is dead.' Being further questioned, the bishop said, 'He is dead to God, for alas! he is become a villain, and is fled to the mountains to be a robber.' Whereupon the Apostle hastened to the mountain fastnesses, and never rested until he had brought back the young man in penitence, and restored him to the Church. (It may be added that the story is told in Wesley's abridgement of Cave's *Primitive Christianity* in the *Christian Library*.)

Eusebius

When we reach Augustine we are on surer ground. The Wesleys evidently knew the *Confessions* well. It was one of the highly interesting list of books which had to be provided (by the direction of an early Conference) for the use of Wesley and the preachers at the three centres of London, Bristol, and Newcastle. Wesley once prepared for the press an edition of it in the original Latin, probably intended for the scholars of Kingswood School.

Augustine

In 1745 Wesley maintained a long correspondence with 'Mr John Smith'—supposed to be the *nom de guerre* of Dr. Secker, Bishop of Oxford. In one of his letters Wesley quoted, as an instance of what he meant by his doctrine of assurance, a whole chapter of the *Confessions*, 'which,' he writes, 'I was reading yesterday.' It is the great passage which ends with the words, 'And Thou criedst to me from afar, Yea, verily, *I am that I am.* And I heard, as the heart heareth, nor had I room to doubt, and I should sooner doubt that I live, than that Truth is not' (vii. 10).

This great spiritual classic has left considerable traces in the hymns of both brothers. A passage in the first book recalls some of Charles Wesley's most impassioned lines. Augustine wrote: 'Hide not Thy face from me. Let me die (that I die not) that I may see Thy face!' (*Moriar ne moriar, ut eam videam*) (i. 5). There is a very similar passage

'Confessions'

in the *Soliloquies*: 'But why dost thou hide Thy face? Haply Thou wilt say, "No man can see Me and live." Ah, Lord, let me die, that I may see Thee; let me see Thee, that I may die.' (*Sed cur faciem tuam abscondis? Forte dicis 'non videbit me homo et vivet'* (Ex. xxxiii. 20). *Eia, Domine, moriar ut te videam. Videam, ut hic moriar*) (Solil. c. i.). This became a favourite thought with the poet of Methodism, and inspired many stanzas such as:

> **I cannot see Thy face and live!**
> ***Then let me see Thy face, and die!***
> **Now, Lord, my gasping spirit receive!**
> **Give me on eagles' wings to fly;**
> **With eagles' eyes on Thee to gaze,**
> **And plunge into the glorious blaze.**

And if there were any doubt about the connexion between such lines as these and the words of the great African Father, it would be dispelled by the fact that another hymn which echoes the thought—

> **Live only Christ in me, not I;**
> ***O let me see Thy face, and die!***

—was headed, when published in the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1742, '*Moriar ut te videam!*' 'Let me die that I may see Thee!' Here the phrase is evidently quoted from the *Soliloquies*.

Another reminiscence of the *Confessions* occurs in John Wesley's translation of Tersteegen's

great hymn, 'Thou hidden love of God, whose height.' The lines—

> My heart is pained, *nor can it be*
> *At rest, till it finds rest in Thee—*

deliberately recall the famous passage: 'Thou dost arouse us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it find rest in Thee!' (i. 1). Here the allusion is John Wesley's own; there is nothing of it in Tersteegen's German, the last lines of which are—

> Ich bin nicht stille, wie ich soll
> Ich fühles ist dem Geist nicht wohl,
> Weil er in dir nicht stehet.

There is a further reminiscence of Augustine in another of John Wesley's translations from the German. The lines—

> *Ah! why did I so late Thee know,*
> *Thee, lovelier than the sons of men!*

—recall the classic passage: 'Too late I loved Thee, Beauty so old and yet so new, too late I loved Thee!' (x. 27). Here it is Scheffler himself who is responsible for the allusion to Augustine, for it is clearer in the German than in the English: 'Ach, dass ich dich so spät erkennet, Du hochgelobte Schönheit du!'

A phrase in one verse of John Wesley's translation of Scheffler's *Du unvergleichlich Gut* has

been coloured by the translator's remembrance of the same passage in Augustine. Angelus wrote 'Du bist die Schönheit selbst, Du kannst nichts Schönres finden! Es kann dich nichts als nur Dein eigne Schönheit binden.' But *die Schönheit selbst* becomes in Wesley's translation, with a memory of Augustine's *pulchritudo antiqua*:

> *Primeval Beauty*! in Thy sight,
> The first-born, fairest sons of light
> See all their brightest glories fade!

In the hymn 'For an Unconverted Child' the lines occur:

> Regard my endless griefs and fears
> *Nor let the son of all these tears*
> *Be finally undone.*

This is an unmistakable allusion to the story told by Augustine in the *Confessions* (iii. 12) about his mother and the Bishop.

Monica and the Bishop

Monica besought the Bishop to see her son, and strive to bring him from the error of his ways. The Bishop replied that it was best to leave him alone, and pray for him. 'When she would not be satisfied, but urged him more, with entreaties and many tears, that he would see me, and discourse with me; he, a little displeased at her importunity, saith, "Go thy ways, and God be with thee: it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish." Which answer she took (as

she often mentioned in her conversations with me) as if it had been a voice from heaven.'

And there is at least one other of Augustine's wonderful phrases in the *Confessions* that influenced the verse of Charles Wesley. It is a part of a great supplication: 'Narrow is the home of my soul; enlarge it, that Thou mayest enter in. It is ruinous; do Thou repair it' (i. 5). This is reflected in the lines—

> Thou know'st the way to bring me back,
> My fallen spirit to restore;
> O for Thy truth and mercy's sake,
> Forgive, and bid me sin no more;
> *The ruins of my soul repair,*
> And make my heart a house of prayer.

There are other passages in the *Soliloquies* which seem to have influenced the hymns. 'Aegrotus sum, ad medicum clamo: caecus sum, ad lucem propero: mortuus sum, ad vitam suspiro. Tu es medicus, tu lux, tu vita. Jesu Nazarene, miserere mei' (c. ii.). It is difficult to read this without thinking that some remembrance of it was in Charles Wesley's mind when he wrote— **'Soliloquies'**

> Jesu, my all in all Thou art;
> My rest in toil, my ease in pain,
> The medicine of my broken heart,
> In war my peace, in loss my gain,
> My smile beneath the tyrant's frown,
> In shame my glory and my crown:

In want my plentiful supply,
In weakness my almighty power,
In bonds my perfect liberty,
My light in Satan's darkest hour,
In grief my joy unspeakable,
My life in death, my heaven in hell.

And here is another characteristic passage: 'Quoniam si quid boni est parvum vel magnum, donum tuum est, et nostrum non est nisi malum' (c. xv.). The thought seems to be reproduced in the lines—

All power is Thine in earth and heaven,
All fullness dwells in Thee alone;
Whate'er I have was freely given,
Nothing but sin I call my own.

And, once more, Augustine's words: 'Et video nunc quia donum tuum est' (c. xv.) seem to be reflected in John Wesley's translation of Scheffler's *Ich will dich liebe, meine Stärke* (there is an unquestioned allusion to Augustine, in the preceding verse, which we have already mentioned):

And now if more at length I see,
'Tis through Thy light, and comes from Thee.

Exposition of St. John's Gospel

Augustine's fine comment upon our Lord's first miracle (*In Joan. Ev. Tract.* viii. 1) is quoted in another hymn. 'For He who made wine on that day at the marriage feast, in those six water-pots, which He commanded to be filled with water, the selfsame does this every

year in vines. . . . But we do not wonder at the latter, because it happens every year: it has lost its marvellousness by its constant recurrence.'

Charles Wesley wrote, in a hymn upon John ii. 7:

> When wine they want, the Almighty Lord
> Water instead of wine demands:
> He both created by His word,
> Nothing His sovereign will withstands:
> *And every year in every vine*
> *He changes water into wine.*

In one of the hymns there is a singular idea as to the intercourse of heaven:

> Where glorified spirits by sight
> Converse in their holy abode.

This, it has been suggested, may be derived from a passage in *Hudibras* (the *Heroical Epistle*)—a strange source!—

> For what can earth produce, but love,
> To represent the joys above?
> Or who but lovers can converse,
> Like angels, by the eye-discourse?

But the notion really comes from Plotinus, and it is quite likely that Charles Wesley may have met with it there. The passage is in the fifth *Ennead* (viii. 4), 'They speak not one with the other; but, *as we understand many things by the eyes only, so does soul read soul in heaven,*

Plotinus

where the spiritual body is pure, and nothing is hidden, and nothing feigned.'

There are two rather recondite allusions in a stanza of one of the hymns on the Passion:

> Dies the glorious Cause of all,
> The true eternal *Pan*,
> Falls to raise us from our fall,
> To ransom sinful man:
> Well may *Sol* withdraw his light,
> With the Sufferer sympathize,
> Leave the world in sudden night,
> While his Creator dies!

Plutarch

The first reference is to the story recorded by Plutarch (*De Oraculorum Defectu*) that in the reign of Tiberius a pilot named Thamus was steering his ship round the coast of Epirus, when he heard voices proclaiming, 'Thamus, Thamus, great Pan is dead!'[1] (Πὰν ὁ μέγας τέθνηκεν.)

Dionysius the Areopagite

The other allusion is fainter. There is a legend that Dionysius the Areopagite, perceiving a disturbance in nature at the time of the Crucifixion, said, Ἢ τὸ Θεῖον πάσχει, ἢ τῷ πάσχοντι συμπάσχει,[2] 'Either the Divinity suffers, or sympathizes with the sufferer!' It would seem that a recollection of this has coloured the line, 'Well may Sol withdraw his light, *With the Sufferer sympathize.*'

[1] Cf. Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (May), and *Gloss.*

[2] Cf. *Brev. Rom.*, Oct. 9 (Lectio 4), and Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.* I. iii. 4.

It is a striking fact that Methodism has supplied English Christendom with hymns for all the great festivals of the ecclesiastical year.

The Hymns and the Ecclesiastical Year

At Christmas 'Hark! the herald angels sing!' is heard in every land where the English language is spoken. It is the same at Easter with 'Christ the Lord is risen to-day!' and much the same on Ascension Day with 'Hail the day that sees Him rise,' and on Whit Sunday with 'Granted is the Saviour's prayer.'

Some time ago an interesting suggestion was made by an Anglican hymnologist[1] with regard to two of these hymns. It was suggested that 'Hark! the herald angels sing!' was possibly inspired by a hymn from the Menaion of the Greek Church, *χριστὸς γεννᾶται · δοξάσατε.* This forms a part of the Canon for Christmas Day. It was written by St. Cosmas, the foster-brother of St. John Damascene, who lived in the first half of the eighth century. Unhappily, there is not a great deal that can be urged in support of this attractive suggestion. There is little likeness between the Greek and the English, not more than we might expect to find between any two hymns for the Nativity, and hardly as much as exists, for example, between Wesley's English and the Latin of Peter the Venerable in the hymn *Coelum gaude, terra plaude.*

[1] Moorsom, *Historical Companion to Hymns Ancient and Modern*, pp. 83, 64.

It was also suggested by the same writer that Charles Wesley may have had in mind, when writing 'Hail the day that sees Him rise,' the hymn of Fortunatus (or a fourteenth-century imitator of his), *Salve festa dies toto venerabilis aevo, Qua Deus ad coelos scandit et astra tenet.* Here, again, there is very little resemblance—none whatever, in fact, except the initial phrase.

Mediaeval Hymns

But these suggestions, baseless as they seem to be, are enough to raise in one's mind the whole question of a possible indebtedness, on the part of the Wesleys, to the great hymns of the Middle Ages. At first sight, such a relation does not seem at all likely. In the eighteenth century the whole of the mediaeval hymnody was a most a *terra incognita.* It was only with the rise of romanticism in literature, at the end of that century, that these hymns began to come to their own. One may say that Scott's use of Thomas of Celano's great dirge (in which he followed Goethe) was almost the beginning of modern interest in mediaeval hymns. And it was nearly half a century later when these hymns began to be recovered for the use of the English Churches by Dr. Neale, and other High Anglican and Catholic scholars. In the age of the Wesleys there was very little knowledge in England of the Latin hymns of the Middle Ages, and still less of the Greek hymns, found in the service-books of the Eastern Church. On the face of it,

therefore, these hymns are not likely to have been known to the brothers.

On the other hand, there are some small but significant facts. John Wesley translated a German hymn which itself was a translation from the Latin. 'Jesu, Thy soul renew my own,' is a version of Scheffler's *Die Seele Christi heil'ge mich*, which again was a version of the mediaeval *Anima Christi sanctifica me*. These lines are entitled in the Roman Breviary 'The Aspirations of St. Ignatius to the Most Holy Redeemer,' but the ascription to the founder of the Society of Jesus is an error. The lines probably date from the fourteenth century. It is surely possible that John Wesley was aware of the Latin original.

Again, when Charles Wesley was in Dublin in 1747 he wrote in his *Journal*: 'I spoke with great freedom to the poor Papists, urging them to repentance and the love of Christ, from the authority of their own Kempis, and *their own Liturgy*.' This can only mean that he was a student of the Breviary—a very suggestive fact. Doubtless it was there that he read the splendid story of the ecstasy of St. Thomas Aquinas, which impressed him so much, and left its mark upon more than one hymn. The incident is told in one of the lessons for the saint's festival.[1] As St. Thomas prayed, he heard the

St. Thomas Aquinas

[1] *Brev. Rom.*, Mar. 7 (Lectio 5).

Saviour's voice saying, 'Thou hast written well of Me; what reward wouldst thou have?' and he exclaimed in answer, 'Thyself, Lord, nothing but Thyself!' This is recalled unmistakably in such lines as—

> Give me Thyself! from every boast,
> From every wish set free,
> Let all I have in Thee be lost,
> But give Thyself to me!

and—

> Nothing beside my God I want,
> Nothing in earth or heaven!

And if Charles Wesley knew the Breviary, he must have known the Latin hymns in it. Accordingly, we are not surprised to find that the language of the great hymn of St. Thomas Aquinas, *Adoro te devote*, has apparently coloured several of our hymns.

A phrase in the first line, *latens Deitas*, appears in a hymn for the Nativity:

> He laid His glory by,
> He wrapped Him in our clay,
> Unmarked by human eye,
> The *latent Godhead* lay.

Then, later in the hymn, the Angelic Doctor wrote:

> Me immundum munda tuo sanguine,
> Cujus una stilla salvum facere
> Totum mundum quit ab omni scelere,

—lines which have been translated very literally thus:

Unclean I am, but cleanse me in Thy blood!
Of which a *single drop*, for sinners spilt,
Can purge the entire world of all its guilt.

This mystical notion of the efficacy of a single drop of the Redeemer's blood became a favourite thought with Charles Wesley:

By all Thou hast done for my sake,
One drop of Thy blood I implore,
Now, now let it touch me, and make
The sinner a sinner no more!

And again:

Sprinkle it, Jesus, on my heart!
One drop of Thine all-cleansing blood
Shall make my sinfulness depart,
And fill me with the life of God!

At least a dozen other examples might be given of the presence of this thought in our hymns. It should be said, in fairness, that the thought occurs in some of the older English poets, notably Donne, who has it more than once:

Now Thou art lifted up, draw me to Thee,
And at Thy death, giving such liberal dole,
Moist *with one drop of Thy blood* my dry soul.

But Donne undoubtedly got it from St. Thomas Aquinas, and so may Charles Wesley, as we have seen. And since he knew the Latin hymns in the Breviary, he may very well have known other mediaeval hymns not found there.

John Wesley certainly did know the old Nativity hymns, *Puer natus in Bethlehem*, and *In dulci jubilo*, for they are found, with some modern Latin hymns written by Johann Wilhelm Petersen (1649–1727), in Freylinghausen's *Gesangbuch*. And the brothers may have encountered in their reading other Latin hymns of the Middle Ages.

Adam of St. Victor

At any rate here is another extraordinary parallel. In a hymn by Adam of St. Victor there is the striking phrase, applied to the Holy Spirit: *Tu qui dator es et donum*, 'Thou who Giver art and Gift'; and in another hymn by the same writer there is a variation of the same phrase, *Tu donum, tu donator*, 'Thou the Gift, Thou the Giver.'

This recurs constantly in Charles Wesley's hymns for Whit-Sunday:

> Life Divine in us renew,
> *Thou the Gift and Giver too.*
>
> For Thee our hearts we lift,
> And wait the heavenly *Gift*
> *Giver*, Lord of life Divine,
> To our dying souls appear.
> Grant the grace for which we pine,
> *Give Thyself*, the Comforter.
>
> I come athirst and faint
> Thy Spirit to receive,
> *Give me the Gift* for which I pant,
> *Thyself the Giver give.*

There are in the hymns many reminiscences of the English Liturgy, as we should expect.

The English Liturgy

> Meet and right it is to sing,
> In every time and place,
> Glory to our heavenly King,
> The God of truth and grace,

is a paraphrase of the Preface and the *Sanctus* of the Communion Office: 'It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty . . . Therefore with angels and archangels . . . '

Similarly—

> Glory be to God on high,
> God, whose glory fills the sky,

is a paraphrase of the *Gloria in Excelsis* of the Communion Office: 'Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee. . . .'

> Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
> Thy Godhead we adore,

is a poetical version of the *Gloria Patri*.

The language of the Litany is paraphrased in the stanza—

> Thou loving, all-atoning Lamb,
> Thee, by Thy painful agony,
> Thy bloody sweat, Thy grief and shame,
> Thy Cross and passion on the tree,
> Thy precious Death and Life, I pray
> Take all, take all my sins away!

And there are numerous other examples of an influence which, in the case of devout Churchmen like the Wesleys, was inevitable.

Mysticism in the Hymns

There is a strain of essential mysticism in the hymns of the Wesleys. The recognition of this fact would correct a frequent mis-judgement. Leslie Stephen wrote: 'Mysticism seemed to John Wesley to be simply folly. His feet were on the solid earth, and he preferred the plain light of day to the glooms and glories loved by more imaginative natures.' [1]

Even so learned and so candid a writer as Dr. Gwatkin thinks that Wesley's teaching was 'as clear and full of common sense as Matthew Tindal's Deism, and as characteristically wanting in a sense of mystery.' [2] Now it is perfectly true that Wesley was a man of his century, that he had a precise and logical intellect, and that he hated vagueness. It is also true that he said hard things, again and again, about 'the mystic divines,' driven thereto by the disastrous effects of an errant Quietism among the Societies. But it should be remembered that there is much on the other side.

Some of the finest of John Wesley's translations from the German are versions of the profoundly mystical hymns of Tersteegen and

[1] *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. xii., p. 87.

[2] *The Knowledge of God*, vol. ii., p. 245.

Scheffler. And then there is the unmistakable accent of mysticism in much of Charles Wesley's verse. The latest French writer on Methodism, Dr. Augustin Leger, has remarked upon this: 'Qui veut aimer Dieu, doit aimer toutes choses en Dieu seul: Un en tous, et tous en Un, formule que répéteront à satiété les vers des Wesley.'[1] Surely they were mystics who wrote:

> O sovereign Love to Thee I cry!
> Give me Thyself, or else I die!
> Save me from death; from hell set free;
> Death, hell, are but the want of Thee,

and—

> Eager for Thee I ask and pant,
> So strong the principle divine,
> Carries me out with sweet constraint,
> Till all my hallowed soul is Thine;
> Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
> And lost in Thy immensity!

and—

> Nothing else in earth or skies,
> In time, or in eternity:
> Heaven itself could not suffice:
> I seek not Thine, but Thee.

Then John Wesley was early and deeply imbued with mystical teaching. He read the *Theologia Germanica* and some of the writings of Tauler in early life, and at Oxford was a professed disciple of William Law. He greatly admired

[1] *La Jeunesse de Wesley*, p. 191.

the writings of the Cambridge Platonists (a distinction in itself for one who lived in the eighteenth century) and printed some of John Smith's Sermons in the *Christian Library*. In the same collection he issued an abridgement of the *Guida Spirituale* of Molinos, the Spanish mystic. There does not appear to have been any other edition in English between 1699 and 1775.

He was specially interested in two mystics of the preceding century, and refers to their life and doctrine again and again—Antoinette Bourignon and Jeanne de la Mothe Guyon.

Antoinette Bourignon

He read Antoinette Bourignon's *Treatise of Solid Virtue* and *Light of the World* in April 1736, while in Georgia. He included the former work in the *Christian Library* in 1754, and many years before he had published translations of some of the author's devotional verse. Scattered through her voluminous works are five hymns, two of which were translated and included in the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1739, *Venez, Jesus, mon salutaire*, 'Come, Saviour Jesus, from above,' and *Adieu, Monde, vray pipeur*, 'World, adieu, thou real cheat!' The identity of the translator is a pretty problem in criticism. The hymns are claimed for Dr. Byrom, on the strength of two facts. First, they are included in his *Miscellaneous Poems* (1773). But, as these were

collected and published ten years after his death, this is not absolutely conclusive evidence. Byrom might have copied out the verses because they interested him by their mysticism, and after his death they might thus have been very easily mistaken for his own. (Yet Wesley read the *Miscellaneous Poems* when they appeared in 1773, and made no remark on the presence of these hymns.) In the second place, there is a letter of Byrom's to Charles Wesley dated March 3, 1738: 'As your brother has brought so many hymns translated from the French, you will have a sufficient number, and no occasion to increase them by the small addition of Mademoiselle Bourignon's two little pieces. I desire you to favour my present weakness, if I judge wrong, and not to publish them.' This seems to us to suggest unmistakably Byrom's authorship of the translations. There remains the difficulty that no other translations from the French are known to have been in John Wesley's possession. Is it possible that this was a slip of Byrom's for 'many hymns translated from the *German*,' of which he had previously heard? The sense would then be, 'since he has so many translated hymns, he will need no more.' Byrom did not himself begin to learn German until several years after this, which would make the mistake as to the language more conceivable. But, on the other side of the question, there is the fact that Byrom wrote to

Byrom or Wesley?

his son on April 26, 1739, referring to the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* published in that year by the Wesleys in these terms: 'They have together printed a book of hymns, amongst which they have inserted two of M. Bourignon's, one of which they call "A Farewell to the World," and the other "Renouncing all for Christ" (Come, Saviour Jesus), I think, from the French.'

The style of the two hymns is unquestionably more like that of John Wesley than like that of Byrom. If the versions were by Byrom, they were certainly somewhat altered by Wesley.

'Where the Christians live!'

An incident related in Antoinette Bourignon's autobiography has influenced the language of one hymn. When the Flemish Quietist was a child, struck by the unlikeness of the life around her to what she read of in the Gospels, she said to her parents, 'Where are the Christians? Let us go to the country *where the Christians live!*' This is remembered in a hymn on 'Primitive Christianity':

> Ye different sects, who all declare
> Lo! here is Christ! or 'Christ is there!'
> Your stronger proofs divinely give,
> And show me *where the Christians live*!

When John Wesley was on his way to Herrnhut in July 1738 he recorded in his *Journal*: 'In the afternoon we came to Weymar, where we had more difficulty to get through the city than is

usual, even in Germany; being not only detained a considerable time at the gate, but also carried before I know not what great man (I believe the Duke) in the Square; who after many other questions, asked what we were going so far as Herrnhut for: I answered, "To see the place where the Christians live." He looked hard, and let us go.'

Moore, in his *Life of Wesley* (i. 329), says that the 'great man' was 'Frederick, afterwards King of Prussia, then Prince Royal, as Mr. Wesley was informed.' It would be attractive to think of an encounter between two men so famous, and so different, as Frederick the Great and John Wesley; but unfortunately there is little to warrant us in such a fancy. Henry Moore was the intimate friend of Wesley, as well as his biographer, and it is not easy to understand how he could be mistaken in the matter, but there is no hint of 'the great man' being Frederick in the *Journal*, either in the passage quoted, or in several later passages which refer unflatteringly to the great King of Prussia. Moreover, it is difficult to understand how he could be doing the work of a city magistrate at Weimar, which was not in Prussian occupation, as Halle was. And finally, Frederick would appear to have been in another part of the country altogether at that time, spending most of July and August in that year upon

John Wesley and Frederick the Great

a visit to the Duchy of Cleves and Loo in Holland.

In 1776 John Wesley published *An Extract of the Life of Madame Guion.* He had long been a critical student of her life and writings.

In 1742 he records in his *Journal* that he read Madam Guyon's *Les Torrents Spirituelles.* It would seem probable that Charles Wesley read it a few years later, for there appear to be traces of it in some hymns published in the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1749. The imagery of the following passages runs through the whole of the *Spiritual Torrents.* 'All have a loving impatience to purify themselves, and to adopt the necessary ways and means of returning to their source and origin, like rivers, which after leaving their source, flow on continuously, in order to precipitate themselves into the sea.' . . . 'Finally . . . they reach the sea, where they are lost to be found no more . . . it is the sea, and yet it is the river, because the river, being lost in the sea, has become one with it.'

Madam Guyon

This thought is reflected in the lines—

> Wherefore to Thee I all resign;
> Being Thou art, and love, and power;
> Thy only will be done, not mine!
> Thee, Lord, let earth and heaven adore!
> *Flow back the rivers to the sea,*
> *And let our all be lost in Thee!*

and in the lines—

> Our love from earthly dross refine:
> Holy, angelical, divine,
> Thee its great Author let it show,
> *And back to the pure Fountain flow,*
> *A drop of that unbounded sea,*
> *O Lord, resorb it into Thee!*

Another favourite image appears in this passage: 'Therefore the heart of man is perpetually in motion, and can find no rest until it returns to its origin and centre, which is God: like fire, which, being removed from its sphere, is in continual agitation, and does not rest till it has returned to it.' This is reflected in another stanza of the last hymn quoted:

> A spark of that ethereal fire,
> Still let it to its Source aspire:
> To Thee in every wish return,
> Intensely for Thy glory burn,
> While all our souls fly up to Thee,
> And blaze through all eternity!

William Law was a mystic if there ever was one, and he was the early master of both brothers. They parted company with him, it is true, but he had an abiding influence upon them. As late as 1768, John Wesley published a volume of extracts from Law's later writings. Many illustrations of Law's influence might be given. There are some favourite ideas of Charles Wesley's which appear

William Law

in the hymns again and again. Such is the thought that the regenerate soul is a reflection of the Holy Trinity:

O that we now, in love renewed,
Might blameless in Thy sight appear!
Wake me in Thy similitude,
Stampt with the Triune character;
Flesh, spirit, soul, to Thee resign,
And live and die entirely Thine!

And when we rise, in love renewed,
Our souls resemble Thee,
An image of the Triune God
To all eternity.

Made like the first happy pair,
Let us here Thy nature share,
Holy, pure, and perfect be,
Transcripts of the Trinity.

. . . a sinless saint
In perfect love renewed;
A mirror of the Deity,
A transcript of the One in Three,
A temple filled with God!

'Transcripts of the Trinity'

Charles Wesley once commented upon these last lines, which had been criticized. In a letter to his wife he wrote—

> You and the other objectors do not understand those lines. 'A transcript of the One in Three' is the definition of man unfallen, and of man restored to the divine image. The expression is Mr. Law's, not mine; who proves a trinity throughout all nature.

The thought recurs perpetually in the writings of William Law.[1] In *An Appeal to all who doubt the Truths of the Gospel*, he writes—

> How could the Holy Trinity be an object of Man's worship and adoration, if the Holy Trinity had not produced itself in Man? . . . Our redemption consists in nothing else but in the *Bringing forth* this new Birth in us . . . that, being thus born again in the *Likeness* of the Holy Trinity, we may be capable of its threefold Blessing and Happiness.

In *Christian Regeneration* he writes—

> We have before shown, that Man was created a *living Image* of the Holy Trinity in Unity, that the *Divine Birth* arose in him, and *that* Father, Son, and Holy Ghost saw themselves in him, in a *creaturely Manner*. . . . There appears a surprising Agreeableness and Fitness, in the Means of our Redemption, namely, that we could *only* be saved by the *eternal Son* of God; that He could only save us by taking *our Nature* upon Him, and so uniting it with Him, that His *Life*, or *Birth*, might again *arise* in us, as at the first, and so we become again a perfect living Image of the Holy Trinity.

The notion also occurs in Byrom's writings. In *An Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple* there are the lines describing Adam—

> Formed in the likeness of the sacred Three,
> He stood immortal, powerful, and free;
> Image of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
> The destined sire of a new heavenly host.

[1] Cf. St. Augustine *De Civ. Dei*, xi. 26.

Jacob Böhme

Byrom and Law had ploughed with the same heifer. They got the thought from Jacob Böhme, who wrote—

> So near thee, indeed, is God, that the birth of the Holy Trinity takes place in thy heart also, and there all Three Persons are born, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (*Aurora*, c. x., 58)

CHAPTER III

THE POETS

ὡς καί τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν
εἰρήκασι . . .

THERE are occasional reminiscences of the Latin poets in the hymns, naturally, for the Wesleys were good classical scholars. Charles Wesley once defended himself against the abuse of that virago, his brother's wife, by reciting Virgil at the top of his voice. Judging by their quotations, Virgil was his favourite Latin poet, as Horace was his brother John's.

Virgil

The most distinct allusion to Virgil that we have traced is in a hymn which paraphrases a famous passage in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* (724–729):

> Principio caelum ac terras camposque liquentis
> Lucentemque globum Lunae Titaniaque astra
> Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus
> Mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet.
> Inde hominum pecudumque genus vitaeque volantum
> Et quae marmoreo fert monstra sub aequore pontus.

It is evident that this has coloured the thought of some of the following lines:

That all-informing breath Thou art
Who dost continued life impart,
And bid'st the world persist to be;
Garnished by Thee yon azure sky
And all those beauteous orbs on high
Depend in golden chains from Thee.

Thou art the Universal Soul,
The plastic power that fills the whole,
And governs earth, air, sea, and sky;
The creatures all Thy breath receive,
And who by Thy inspiring live,
Without Thy inspiration die.

Spirit immense, eternal Mind,
That on the souls of lost mankind
Dost with benignest influence move,
Pleased to restore the ruined race,
And new-create a world of grace
In all the image of Thy love!

Horace

The most striking allusion to Horace is in the hymn, 'Stand the omnipotent decree!'—which, while a paraphrase of a passage in Young's *Night Thoughts*, is yet influenced by the ode, 'Justum et tenacem propositi virum'—

Si fractus illabitur orbis,
Inpavidum ferient ruinae. (iii. 3.)

Let this earth dissolve and blend
In death the wicked and the just,
Let those ponderous orbs descend
And grind us into dust.
Rests secure the righteous man!

The English poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have influenced the hymns very considerably, especially Milton, George Herbert, Dryden, Prior, and Young.

Milton

The influence of Milton is visible everywhere in the hymns. The great Puritan poet is the source of many of their striking phrases, and his influence upon the poetic style of the Wesleys is greater, perhaps, than that of any other writer. John Wesley apparently knew a great part of *Paradise Lost* by heart. At Kingswood, in 1750, he 'selected passages of Milton for the eldest children to transcribe and repeat weekly.' Later —in 1763—he published *An Extract from Milton's Paradise Lost*, and in the Preface declared that 'Of all the poems which have hitherto appeared in the world, in whatever age or nation, the preference has generally been given by impartial judges to Milton's *Paradise Lost*.'

One or two passages in which the hymns reflect the language of the great poet are well known. Thus:

> O dark, dark, dark, I still must say
> Amid the blaze of gospel day,

'Samson Agonistes'

is a reminiscence of the wonderful plaint of the blinded giant in *Samson Agonistes*:

> Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half,
> O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,

Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse,
Without all hope of day!

And the fine stanza:

With Thee conversing, I forget
All time, and toil, and care;
Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
If Thou, my God, art here,

deliberately recalls the words of Eve to Adam:

With thee conversing, I forget all time,
All seasons and their change; all please alike.

There are many other examples, however, less obvious than these, or at any rate less noticed, which are yet unmistakable allusions to Milton. For instance:

'Paradise Lost'

Thine arm hath safely brought us
A way no more expected
Than when Thy sheep passed through the deep
By *crystal walls* protected,

reminds us of the lines:

As on dry land, between two crystal walls,
Awed by the rod of Moses so to stand
Divided till his rescued gain their shore.

The quoted phrase, by the way, occurs a second time in *Paradise Lost.*

The first apostrophe in

O unexampled Love!
O all-redeeming Grace!
How swiftly didst Thou move
To save a fallen race! . . .

is from the same source:

> . . . O unexampled Love!
> Love nowhere to be found less than divine!

In the lines:

> But above all lay hold
> On faith's victorious shield,
> *Armed with that adamant and gold*
> Be sure to win the field,

the poet of Methodism has borrowed his vivid phrase from the description of the arch-fiend:

> Satan, with vast and haughty strides advanced,
> Came towering, armed in adamant and gold.

In the verse:

> With glorious clouds encompassed round,
> Whom angels *dimly see*,
> Will the Unsearchable be found,
> Or God appear to me?

there is a remembrance of the address to the Most High put into the mouths of our first parents in the fifth book of the poem:

> Unspeakable! Who sitt'st above these heavens
> To us invisible, or dimly seen.

The one majestic phrase in the stanza:

> From heaven angelic voices sound,
> See the almighty Jesus crowned!
> *Girt with omnipotence* and grace
> And glory decks the Saviour's face!

is from the discourse of Raphael:

> meanwhile the Son,
> On His great expedition now appeared,
> Girt with omnipotence, with radiance crowned.

Behind Milton's phrase there is, of course, the language of Ps. lxv. 6.

The stanza in one of the hymns on holiness:

> He wills that I should holy be,
> That holiness I long to feel,
> That full, *divine conformity*
> To all my Saviour's blessed will,

borrows a phrase from the address of Michael:

> Judge not what is best
> By pleasure, though to Nature seeming meet,
> Created, as thou art, to nobler end,
> Holy and pure, conformity divine.

Charles Wesley wrote, in another hymn:

> For every sinful action
> Thou hast atonement made,
> *The rigid satisfaction*
> Thy precious death hath paid.

The striking phrase is a quotation from Milton:

> Die he or justice must; unless for him
> Some other, able, and as willing, pay
> The rigid satisfaction, death for death.

One phrase which occurs often in the hymns of the Wesleys is particularly unfortunate; we mean that awkward ellipsis 'the stony':

> *The stony* from my heart remove,
> And give me, Lord, O give me love,
> Or at Thy feet I die.

It sounds unpleasantly like Mr. Swiveller's references to the rosy and the mazy. But the Wesleys were following the Miltonic usage, seen, to give one example only, in the lines:

> . . . For from the mercy-seat above
> Prevenient grace descending had removed
> The stony from their hearts.

A phrase from the magnificent lines with which the third book of *Paradise Lost* begins was used by the Wesleys again and again:

> Hail, holy Light! offspring of heaven first-born!
> Or of the Eternal co-eternal Beam.

This is remembered in the beginning of a hymn:

> *Eternal Beam* of Light Divine,
> Fountain of unexhausted Love,

and in the closing lines of one of John Wesley's splendid translations:

> *Thou Beam of the Eternal Beam,*
> Thou purging Fire, Thou quickening Flame!

There is nothing corresponding to this in Tersteegen's German. It is John Wesley's remembrance of Milton. Doubtless the word had behind it, in the thought of both Milton and Wesley, the ἀπαύγασμα of the Apostolic writer in Heb. i. 3.

George Herbert was a favourite poet with both the Wesleys. They adapted a considerable number of pieces from *The Temple* as hymns, and included them in their early publications. They must have been familiar with Herbert from childhood, for he was one of the writers most beloved by Susanna Wesley, and probably they hardly knew when they were echoing his words.

George Herbert

The line in *Obedience*:

> O let Thy sacred will
> All Thy delight in me fulfil!

is borrowed in John Wesley's translation of Zinzendorf's *Du ewiger Abgrund der seligen Liebe*:

> The dictates of Thy sovereign will,
> With joy our grateful hearts receive;
> *All Thy delight in us fulfil*;
> Lo! all we are to Thee we give.

The first stanza of *A True Hymn*:

> My joy, my life, my crown!
> My heart was meaning all the day,
> Somewhat it fain would say:
> And still it runneth muttering up and down
> With only this, 'My joy, my life, my crown!'

has influenced the language of another of John Wesley's translations, his great version of Scheffler's *Ich will dich lieben, meine Stärke*, where, in the last verse:

> Thee will I love, *my joy, my crown*,
> Thee will I love, my Lord, my God!

represents:

> Ich will dich lieben, meine Krone,
> Ich will dich lieben, meinen Gott.

And, curiously enough, in still another hymn from the German, John Wesley's version of Joachim Lange's *O Jesu, süsses Licht*, the lines:

> O God, what offering shall I give
> To Thee, the Lord of earth and skies?
> My spirit, soul, and flesh receive,
> A holy, living sacrifice;
> Small as it is, 'tis all my store;
> *More should'st Thou have, if I had more,*

suggest a recollection of Herbert's *Praise*:

> To write a verse or two is all the praise
> That I can raise:
> Mend my estate in any ways
> Thou shalt have more.

The last lines of the verse in Lange's German are merely 'Dass soll mein Opfer sein, Weil ich sonst nichts vermag.'

A phrase in *The Pulley*:

> Let us (said He) pour on Him all we can:
> Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
> Contract into a span,

is remembered and used nobly in a hymn for the Nativity:

> Our God, *contracted to a span*,
> Incomprehensibly made man.

The lines in *Longing*:

> Lord Jesu, Thou did'st bow
> Thy dying head upon the tree,

are recalled in the verse:

> Vessels, instruments of grace,
> Pass we thus our happy days
> 'Twixt the mount and multitude,
> Doing or receiving good;
> Glad to pray and labour on,
> Till our earthly course is run,
> Till we, *on the sacred tree,*
> *Bow the head, and die like Thee.*

The line in *Sunday*:

> O let me take thee at the bound,
> Leaping with thee from seven to seven,
> Till that we both, being tossed from earth,
> Fly hand in hand to heaven!

is remembered in another hymn:

> Let us all together rise,
> To Thy glorious life restored,
> Here regain our paradise,
> Here prepare to meet our Lord;
> Here enjoy the earnest given,
> *Travel hand in hand to heaven!*

And the thought in *Praise*:

> Small it is, in this poor sort
> To enrol Thee:
> E'en eternity is too short
> To extol Thee,

is remembered in a version of one of the Psalms:

> *And all eternity shall prove*
> *Too short* to utter all His love.

Some of the reminiscences of Dryden's lines in the hymns are striking and unmistakable, and altogether the allusions are enough to show a pretty close acquaintance on the part of the Wesleys with nearly all that the poet wrote.

Dryden

Charles Wesley's fine evening hymn:

> All praise to Him who dwells in bliss,
> Who made both day and night:
> *Whose Throne is darkness in the abyss*
> *Of uncreated light,*

deliberately borrows a great line from *The Hind and the Panther*:

> But, gracious God, how well dost Thou provide
> For erring judgements an unerring Guide!
> Thy throne is darkness in the abyss of light,
> A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.

One of the hymns for the Nativity recalls another line from the same poem, for

> *Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,*
> Hail the incarnate Deity!

is an echo of Dryden's argument for Transubstantiation—

> Could He His Godhead veil in flesh and blood,
> And not veil these again to be our food?

The hymn:

> Love Divine, all loves excelling,
> Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
> Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
> All Thy faithful mercies crown,

owes both its trochaic metre and the form of its first line to the 'Song of Venus' in *King Arthur*:

> Fairest Isle, all isles excelling,
> Seat of pleasures and of loves;
> Venus here will choose her dwelling,
> And forsake her Cyprian groves.

One of the hymns for Advent:

> Stupendous height of heavenly love,
> Of pitying tenderness divine!
> It brought the Saviour from above,
> It caused the springing day to shine,
> The Sun of Righteousness to appear,
> *And gild our gloomy hemisphere,*

adopts a phrase from the juvenile and affected *Elegy upon the Death of Lord Hastings*:

> Lived Tycho now, struck with this ray (which shone
> More bright i' th' morn than others beam at noon),
> He'd take his astrolabe and seek out here,
> What new star 'twas did gild our hemisphere.

The verse:

> The things unknown to feeble sense,
> Unseen by *reason's glimmering ray*
> With strong commanding evidence,
> Their heavenly origin display,

owes a phrase to the *Religio Laici*:

> So reason's glimmering ray
> Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
> But guide us upward to a better day.

The hymn:

> O God of God, in whom combine
> The heights and depths of love divine,
> With thankful hearts to Thee we sing:
> To Thee our longing souls aspire,
> In fervent flames of strong desire:
> *Come, and Thy sacred unction bring!*

borrows an entire line from Dryden's translation of the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*:

> Come, and Thy sacred unction bring
> To sanctify us while we sing!

One of the penitential hymns echoes a phrase of Dryden's which he used in a very different connexion. Wesley wrote:

> The godly grief, *the pleasing smart,*
> The meltings of a broken heart,

evidently remembering a lively love-song in *The Maiden Queen*:

> I feel a flame within which so torments me
> That it both pains my heart and yet contents me;
> 'Tis such a pleasing smart, and I so love it,
> That I would rather die than once remove it.

And there are several other cases where single phrases or striking epithets of Dryden's have passed, perhaps unconsciously, into the hymns. So Wesley's 'O'er earth *in endless circles roved*,'

is an echo of *Religio Laici*, 'Thus anxious thoughts in endless circles roll'; and '*the all-atoning* Lamb' (which occurs frequently in the hymns) borrows the epithet from a line in *Absalom and Achitophel*:

> Then, seized with fear, yet still affecting fame,
> Usurped a patriot's all-atoning name.

Cowley

There are one or two allusions to Cowley. In the verses entitled *Life* occur the lines:

> But angels in their full-enlightened state,
> Angels who live, and know what 'tis to be!
> Who all the nonsense of our language see,
> And words, our ill-drawn pictures, scorn,
> When we, by a foolish figure, say,
> Behold an old man dead! then they
> Speak properly, and say, Behold a man-child born!

This is recalled in one of the finest of the Funeral hymns:

> When from flesh the spirit freed,
> Hastens homeward to return,
> *Mortals cry, 'A man is dead!'*
> *Angels sing, 'A child is born!'*

There is a slighter parallel in Prior, a favourite poet with both the Wesleys:

> And while the buried man we idly mourn,
> Do angels joy to see his better half return?

A hymn, popularly supposed to have been written at Land's End, has the lines:

> Lo! on a narrow neck of land
> 'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand
> Secure, insensible.

Cowley has the thought in *Life*:

> Vain, weak-built isthmus which dost proudly rise
> Up betwixt two eternities.

The comparison was frequent in the eighteenth century. Prior wrote in *Solomon*:

> Amid two seas on one small point of land,
> Wearied, uncertain, and amazed we stand.

And Pope, in the *Essay on Man*:

> Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
> A being darkly wise, and rudely great.

Addison has the thought in the *Spectator*, in language which supplies the closest parallel of all:

> In our speculations of Eternity, we consider the Time which is present to us the Middle, which divides the whole time into two equal Parts. For this Reason, many witty Authors compare the present Time to an Isthmus or *narrow Neck of Land* that rises in the midst of an ocean, immeasurably diffused on either Side of it.

Addison's 'Spectator'

There are several other evidences in the hymns of that familiarity with Addison's *Spectator* which we should expect on the part of the Wesleys. A line of Addison's version of Ps. xxiii. (which Wesley republished in the *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* of 1738):

> Thy friendly Crook shall give me Aid,
> And guide me through the dreadful Shade,

is borrowed in one of the Advent hymns:

> And cheer the souls of death afraid,
> *And guide them through the dreadful shade.*

Dr. John Duncan once remarked upon the *curiosa felicitas* of a line in the stanza:

> All are not lost and wandered back,
> All have not left Thy Church and Thee;
> There are who suffer for Thy sake,
> Enjoy *Thy glorious infamy*,
> Esteem the scandal of the Cross,
> And only seek divine applause.

The happy phrase is borrowed, with a variation, from an apostrophe in the paper which Steele contributed to the *Spectator*, on Good Friday, 1712 (it is really reprinted from *The Christian Hero*): 'See where they have nailed the Lord and Giver of Life! How His wounds blacken, His Body writhes, and Heart heaves with Pity and with Agony! O Almighty Sufferer, look down, look down from *Thy triumphant Infamy*!'

A French Sonnet

But the most striking illustration of the influence of the *Spectator* is an example in which the verse of Charles Wesley was considerably indebted to a French sonnet quoted by Addison in its pages — an indebtedness which was first indicated, in a very roundabout fashion,

by no less an eighteenth-century personage than Mrs. Piozzi.

In 1745 the Rev. Thomas Church (the friend of Bolingbroke), who was Vicar of Battersea and Prebendary of St. Paul's, published a pamphlet entitled *Remarks on the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Last Journal.* He was one of the fairest of Wesley's innumerable critics. Thirty years afterwards, Wesley referred to him in contrast with Rowland Hill, and said that he was 'a gentleman, a scholar, and a Christian: and as such he both spoke and wrote.' In the *Remarks* Church attacked the 'extravagancy and presumption' of the lines:

Contemporary Critics

> Doom, if Thou canst, to endless pains,
> And drive me from Thy face;
> But if Thy stronger love constrains,
> Let me be saved by grace!

Wesley answered the *Remarks* in a letter addressed to the author, and a second pamphlet, *Some Further Remarks*, in a second letter. He expressed a natural amazement that the lines should have been so grossly misunderstood, and defended them as being 'one of the strongest forms of obtestation, of adjuring God to show mercy, by all His grace, and truth, and love.'

Four years later, in 1749, Lavington, a much less reputable antagonist, repeated Church's attack. He quoted the same lines, and reiterated

the charge of presumption, in *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared.* A copy of the first edition of the first part of Lavington's book was in the possession of Mrs. Piozzi, that lively lady who was Mrs. Thrale in earlier life, the friend of Dr. Johnson, and familiar to all readers of Boswell. She was very fond of writing marginal comments in her books. One of her biographers has remarked upon the habit. She enriched the margin of Lavington's book with considerable annotations. One of these is a comment on the lines he quoted: 'Doom, if Thou canst, to endless pains, And drive me from Thy face!' She says that they are 'in imitation of the famous French sonnet by Despreaux, but by an awkwardness of expression seem to lay the Supreme Being under constraint of destiny, and that is neither good philosophy nor good religion. In the French sonnet there is no such fault.'

Mrs. Piozzi's Comment

We were unable to discover any sonnet by the famous poet Despreaux, better known as Boileau, which fits this reference; nor is he very likely to have written such a one. This is, in fact, an example of the trivial inaccuracy for which Boswell so often reproaches Mrs. Piozzi. For it is a famous sonnet by *Des Barreaux*, a poet of the generation immediately preceding Boileau, of which she was thinking. The editors of the

Des Barreaux

old collection of French poetry[1] in which we found it say that the reputation of Des Barreaux 'rests upon a single sonnet, which is perhaps the masterpiece of that kind of verse' (*le chef-d'œuvre de ce genre*). Almost immediately after finding this, we happened upon an essay of Addison's in the *Spectator*, in which he quotes the sonnet in full, and describes it as 'a noble hymn in French . . . written by Monsieur Des Barreaux, who had been one of the greatest wits and libertines in France, but in his last years as remarkable a penitent.'

Jacques Vallée, Seigneur des Barreaux, was born in 1602, and died in 1673. He was a counsellor in the Parliament of Paris, but would never plead a cause, and eventually resigned the office, according to some accounts, that he might devote himself wholly to pleasure. Another story is that Cardinal Richelieu fell in love with the famous Marion de Lorme,[2] who was Des Barreaux's mistress, and that after the Cardinal had made some overtures to Des Barreaux, which he rejected, Richelieu became his determined enemy, and forced him to give up his office, and leave Paris.[3]

Des Barreaux wrote many Latin and French verses, but never published anything. Pascal makes a casual reference to him. Writing in the

[1] *Les Poètes François depuis le XIIe Siècle jusqu'à Malherbe* (1824).

[2] The heroine of Victor Hugo's drama.

[3] Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, vol. iv. pp. 577-581.

Pensées, of the war between reason and passion, he alleges Des Barreaux as an example of 'those who would renounce their reason and become brute beasts.' He lived an exceedingly dissolute life, but in his later years repented and reformed, and spent his last days in religious retirement at Chalon-sur-Saône.

He wrote this sonnet three or four years before his death. It is entitled 'A Sinner's Recourse to the Goodness of God.' We have roughly translated it thus:

O God, just are Thy judgements, just and right!
Vast is Thy mercy, and Thy patience long;
But I have done such evil in Thy sight
As to forgive would do Thy justice wrong.
Sin has annulled Thy love's prerogative;
Thou canst not pardon such a wretch as I,
Thy righteousness forbids Thee to forgive,
Thy mercy must stand helpless while I die.
Then take Thy vengeance, Lord—I plead no more—
Mock at my tears, who mocked Thee to Thy face;
Strike, slay! avenge Thee on my hardihood—
I perish, yet Thy justice I adore;
But where shall fall Thy thunders? on what place
That is not covered with the Saviour's blood?

The last lines of the French are:

Tonne, frappe, il est temps, rends-moi guerre pour guerre;
J'adore en perissant la raison qui t'aigrit;
Mais dessus quel endroit tombera ton tonnerre,
Qui ne soit tout couvert du sang de Jesus-Christ!

Charles Wesley must have seen this sonnet in

the *Spectator*, and, besides, a letter is extant, written to him by John Fletcher, which quotes some lines of it as if they were perfectly familiar to them both.[1] Fletcher is describing his own experience at that time, when he was passing through a season of spiritual depression: 'It seemed altogether incompatible with the holiness, the justice, and the veracity of the Supreme Being to admit so stubborn an offender into His presence. I could do nothing but be astonished at the patience of God; and I would willingly have sung those verses of Desbaraux (sic) if I had had strength:

John Fletcher quotes the lines

> Tonne, frappe, il est temps, rends-moi guerre pour guerre;
> J'adore en perissant la raison qui t'aigrit.'

There is no doubt that the sonnet has considerably influenced the verse of Charles Wesley. There are echoes of it in

> But if my gracious day is past,
> And I am banished from Thy sight,
> When into outer darkness cast,
> My Judge, I'll own, hath done me right,
> Adore the Hand whose stroke I feel,
> Nor murmur when I sink to hell.

and—

> Then pour Thy vengeance on my head,
> And quench the smoking flax in me;
> Break (if Thou canst) a bruised reed,
> And cast me out who come to Thee.

[1] Tyerman's *Life of Fletcher*, p. 43.

and—

> While groaning at Thy feet I fall,
> Spurn me away, refuse my call;
> If love permit, contract Thy brow
> And if Thou canst, destroy me now!

But there are some lines in one of the Eucharistic hymns which put the matter beyond doubt, for the allusion to the last lines of the sonnet is exact and unmistakable:

> Still the wounds are open wide,
> The blood doth freely flow,
> As when first His sacred side
> Received the deadly blow;
> Still, O God, the blood is warm,
> *Covered with the blood we are;*
> *Find a part it doth not arm,*
> *And strike the sinner there!*

John Fletcher, who has been mentioned as quoting Des Barreaux's lines to Charles Wesley, was the saint of early Methodism.

John Fletcher's Ecstasy

In Wesley's *Life of Fletcher*, the following story is told in the language of Joseph Benson, from whom Wesley received it:

'I have sometimes seen him on these occasions [at Trevecca], once in particular, so filled with the love of God, that he could contain no more; but cried out, "O my God, withhold Thy hand, or the vessel will burst!" But he afterwards told me he was afraid he had grieved the Spirit of God; and that he ought rather to have prayed that the Lord would have enlarged the vessel,

or have suffered it to break; that the soul might have no further bar or interruption to its enjoyment of the supreme good.'[1]

The most singular circumstance here is that the experience is paralleled in the lives of many of the saints. It seems to be, if the phrase may be allowed, a standard type of spiritual ecstasy. It is related, in almost the same terms, with the same appeal against such excessive bliss, in the lives of holy men and women as different from John Fletcher as St. Francis Xavier, St. Philip Neri, and Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque,—and, in our own days, Mr. Evan Roberts, the leader of the Welsh Revival of 1905.[2] But it was doubtless the wonderful experience of Fletcher that is recalled in Charles Wesley's fervent lines:

> O would He more of heaven bestow,
> *And let the vessel break!*
> And let our ransomed spirits go
> To grasp the God we seek!

Samuel Wesley the younger

Both John and Charles Wesley owed much, in many ways, to their elder brother Samuel. While he was Usher at Westminster School, he was the trusted friend of Prior and Pope; and he was a poet himself, not greatly gifted, but more than

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xi. p. 296.

[2] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 243; Hagenbach, *History of the Reformation*, ii. 409; and Bois, *Le Réveil au Pays de Galles*, p. 411.

the equal of others who have made a greater name. There are constant reminiscences of his verse in the hymns.

In *The Battle of the Sexes* he wrote (addressing the lady who later became his wife):

> And thou, dear object of my growing love,
> Whom now I must not, or I dare not, name,
> Approve my verse, which shines if you approve!

John Wesley borrowed a line of this in his translation of Spangenberg's *Der König ruht and schauet doch*:

> *Great object of our growing love,*
> To whom our more than all we owe,
> Open the fountain from above,
> And let it our full souls o'erflow!

and the phrase is used many times in other hymns.

Many other lines in the same poem are quoted in the hymns, such as:

> Now cruel false, now seeming faithful, kind,
> With well-dressed hate, and well-dissembled love,

in—

> O may I calmly wait,
> Thy succours from above!
> And stand against their open *hate,*
> *And well-dissembled love,*

and—

> His hardened front, unblushing, unappalled,
> Laughed at reproaches, and enjoyed disgrace,

in—

> I then shall turn my steady face,
> Want, pain defy, *enjoy disgrace,*
> Glory in dissolution near!

and—

> With cool disdain, the preacher he derides,
> Who marks the eternal bounds of good and ill,

in—

> To time our every smile or frown,
> To *mark the bounds of good and ill*,
> And beat the pride of nature down,
> And bend or break his rising will.

Easter Hymn

In a *Hymn on Easter Day*, Samuel Wesley wrote :

> In vain the stone, the watch, the seal,
> Forbid an early rise,
> To Him who breaks the gates of hell,
> And opens Paradise.

This is closely copied in Charles Wesley's great Easter hymn, ' Christ the Lord is risen to-day ! ' :

> *Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,*
> Christ hath *burst the gates of hell* :
> Death *in vain forbids His rise*,
> Christ hath *opened Paradise !*

Samuel Wesley wrote an elegy *On the Death of Mr. William Morgan.* He was an early associate of John and Charles Wesley at Oxford, whose death they were accused of hastening by the austerities which the early Methodists practised. In this poem occur these lines, describing Morgan :

> Fearful of sin in every close disguise ;
> Unmoved by threatening or by glozing lies,
> Whose zeal, for other men's salvation shown,
> Beyond the reach of hell secured his own.

Two phrases in these lines are reflected in the hymns:

> I want a true regard,
> A single, steady aim,
> (*Unmoved by threatening* or reward),
> To Thee, and Thy great Name.
>
> Let us then sweet counsel take,
> How to make our calling sure,
> Our election how to make,
> *Past the reach of hell secure.*

And there are many other phrases in the poems of Samuel Wesley that are similarly reflected in the hymns written by his younger and more famous brothers.

Prior

The hymns were very considerably influenced by the poems of Prior. There is, of course, a special reason for the high esteem in which Prior was held by all the Wesleys. He was the intimate friend of Atterbury—that singular prelate of whom John Wesley has recorded so high an opinion. And Samuel Wesley the younger, while Usher at Westminster School, was the trusted companion of Atterbury. He would meet Prior many a time at the Deanery, and John also, on his visits to the elder brother, would doubtless see the good-natured poet frequently. One can imagine that the Usher would point the moral of Mr. Prior's rise to greatness through scholarship—had he not been Ambassador at Paris, and did it not all begin through construing Horace in

a tavern? At any rate, John Wesley held Prior in great esteem; and toward the end of his life, in his *Thoughts on the Character and Writings of Mr. Prior*, he went out of his way to defend the poet's memory.

An edition of Prior, with a memoir, appeared in 1779. Apparently this occasioned the revival of some scandalous stories which had been set about by Arbuthnot, Spence (of the *Anecdotes*), and Pope, as to the identity of Prior's 'Chloe.' Wesley wrote: 'I do not believe one word of this. Although I was often in his neighbourhood, I never heard a word of it before. It carries no face of probability. Would Bishop Atterbury have kept up an acquaintance with a man of such a character?'

Wesley passes on to express a high opinion of Prior's genius, and to record his judgement that his best verse does 'not yield to anything that has been wrote either by Pope, or Dryden, or any English poet, except Milton.' Especially he praises *Solomon*, as containing 'the strongest sense expressed in some of the finest verses that ever appeared in the English tongue.'

Charles Wesley shared his brother's admiration, and often recommended *Solomon* to his younger friends. He wrote, in a letter to his daughter Sally (Oct. 1, 1778): 'You should therefore be always getting something by heart. Begin with the first book of Prior's *Solomon, the Vanity of Knowledge.*

'Solomon'

Let me see how much of it you can repeat when we meet.'

Accordingly, we find frequent reminiscences of the poem in the hymns of the brothers.

The second line of the couplet:

> We weave the chaplet, and we crown the bowl,
> And smiling see the nearer waters roll,

was clearly in the mind of Charles Wesley when he wrote:

> Jesu, Lover of my soul,
> Let me to Thy bosom fly,
> While *the nearer waters roll*,
> While the tempest still is high.

The lines spoken by the Egyptian:

> Or grant thy passion has these names destroy'd:
> That Love, like Death, makes all distinction void,

were evidently the inspiration of a verse in the hymn which Edward FitzGerald so much admired:

> *Love, like Death, hath all destroyed,*
> *Rendered our distinctions void!*
> Names, and sects, and parties fall:
> Thou, O Christ, art all in all!

And Prior's apostrophe:

> From *Now*, from *instant Now*, great Sire! dispel
> The clouds that press my soul: from *Now* reveal
> A gracious beam of light; from *Now* inspire
> My tongue to sing, my hand to touch the lyre,

was apparently in the memory of the writer of the magnificent lines:

> While low at Jesu's Cross I bow,
> He hears the blood of sprinkling *now*.
> This *instant now* I may receive
> The answer of His powerful prayer;
> This *instant now* by Him I live,
> His prevalence with God declare.

There are also phrases of constant occurrence in the hymns that are traceable to the same source. 'The sun's directer rays' (found in hymns by both Samuel and Charles Wesley, and in a schoolboy translation of Horace by John Wesley), 'our cautioned soul,' 'my constant flame,'—these are all from *Solomon*.

The other poems of Prior have not influenced the Wesleys so much, but that is as we should expect; the difference of subject and tone amply accounts for it. Still, there are a few clear allusions to the minor poems. In his *Ode to a Lady, She refusing to continue a Dispute with Me*, Prior wrote:

> You, far from danger as from fear,
> Might have sustained an open fight.

Charles Wesley wrote, in the hymn 'Captain of Israel's Host and Guide':

> *As far from danger as from fear,*
> While Love, Almighty Love, is near.

In *Charity, a Paraphrase of the Thirteenth*

Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Prior wrote:

> Soft peace she brings wherever she arrives,
> She builds our quiet, as she forms our lives,
> Lays the rough paths of peevish nature ev'n,
> And opens in each heart a little heaven.

This is remembered in the hymn:

> The peace Thou hast given, This moment impart,
> *And open Thy heaven, O Love, in my heart!*

And once more, Prior wrote in his *Henry and Emma*, an abominable Georgian perversion of a delightful old ballad (which John Wesley republished in the *Arminian Magazine*, to the great scandal of some of his followers):

> If love, alas! be pain, the pain I bear
> No thought can figure and no tongue declare.

John Wesley, in his superb translation of Gerhardt's hymn, wrote:

> Jesu, Thy boundless love to me
> *No thought can reach, no tongue declare,*

adopting Prior's phrase, and improving it.

To-day Matthew Prior is very largely a forgotten poet. But he had as much of the genuine poetic gift as any writer of his age. John Wesley, in this matter at any rate is in very good company, for he is at one with writers as diverse as Cowper, Thackeray, and Swinburne, in his admiration for the genius of Prior.

Something of the freedom of their versification the Wesleys certainly owed to Prior. It was his influence that saved them from the monotonous antithesis of the 'correct' style of Pope, and almost every eighteenth-century writer, following in his train. In the Preface to *Solomon* Prior wrote: 'I would say one word of the measure in which this and most poems of the age are written. Heroic with continued rhyme, as Donne and his contemporaries used it, carrying the sense of one verse most commonly into another, was found too dissolute and wild, and came very often too near prose. As Davenant and Waller corrected, and Dryden perfected it, it is too confined: it cuts off the sense at the end of every first line, which must always rhyme to the next following, and consequently produces too frequent an identity in the sound, and brings every couplet to the point of an epigram.' Johnson, in his *Lives of the Poets*, characteristically decides that Prior's attempt to put his critical principle into practice, 'by extending the sense from one couplet to another, with variety of pauses,' is 'without success: his interrupted lines are unpleasing, and his sense, as less distinct, is less striking.' We do not agree: *Solomon* is more free, more fluent, in its use of the heroic measure than any poem that was published within the next three generations. One of Prior's favourite methods of breaking the

Prior's Influence

monotony of the couplet brings about a pause after the second syllable of the second line, as in

And at approach of death shall only know
The truths, . . . which from these pensive members flow.

On the vile worm, that yesterday began
To crawl; . . . Thy fellow creature, abject man!

Yet take thy bent, my soul; another sense
Indulge, . . . add music to magnificence.

John Wesley caught this trick of *enjambement* from Prior, and his hymns abound with it. One or two examples will serve where dozens might be given:

To gain earth's gilded toys, or flee
The Cross . . . endured, my God, by Thee?

A man! an heir of death! a slave
To sin! . . . a bubble on the wave.

Pope

The verse of the Wesleys has not been greatly influenced by the writings of Pope, with the exception of a single poem. The hymns only contain two or three slight allusions to the *Essay on Man*, but they echo the language of *Eloïsa to Abelard* in the most extraordinary way. Probably Charles Wesley had got the poem by heart, and hardly knew when he was quoting it.

The first line of the couplet:

Thy eyes diffused a reconciling ray,
And gleams of glory brightened all the day,

is recalled in one of Charles Wesley's earliest hymns, with a single change necessitated by the metre:

Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.

The lines:

To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,
And melts in visions of eternal day,

are remembered in another hymn:

Till, on the bosom of my Lord,
I sink in blissful dreams away
And *visions of eternal day.*

The thought in the passage:

When, at the close of each sad, sorrowing day,
Fancy restores what vengeance snatched away,
Then conscience sleeps, and leaving nature free,
All my loose soul unbounded springs to thee,

is remembered and redeemed to a nobler significance in an evening hymn:

Loose me from the chains of sense,
Set me *from the body free*;
Draw, with stronger influence,
My unfettered soul to Thee!
In me, Lord, Thyself reveal,
Fill me with a sweet surprise:
Let me Thee when waking feel;
Let me in Thine image rise.

The lines in the same poem:

O happy state, when souls each other draw,
When love is liberty, and nature law,

lines which Pope repeated with a variation in the *Essay on Man*:

> Converse and love mankind might strongly draw,
> When love was liberty, and nature law,

were evidently in Charles Wesley's mind when he wrote:

> Implant it deep within,
> Whence it may ne'er remove,
> The *law* of *liberty* from sin,
> The perfect *law* of *love*.
> Thy *nature* be my *law*,
> Thy spotless sanctity,
> And sweetly every moment draw
> My happy soul to Thee.

Young

It is difficult for us in these days to understand the immense vogue of Young's *Night Thoughts* in the eighteenth century. Young's turgid platitudes are so wearisome to a modern reader that it needs an effort to discern the real poetic power which sometimes underlies the bombastic lines, and which goes some way toward justifying the rather fantastic judgement of D. G. Rossetti, that Young was the greatest poet of his century. But there can be no doubt as to the extent of Young's fame and influence in that age. Charles Wesley set his daughter to learn by heart long passages of Young's poem, and he himself more than once transcribed the whole of it. He said expressly: 'No writings but the inspired are more useful to me.' And

some of the greatest names of that century might be quoted in support of Charles Wesley's high estimate of Young. He was in good company, at least, in his admiration for a poet who influenced Goethe, who was quoted on the scaffold by Camille Desmoulins, and to the study of whose writings Burke himself ascribed his own splendid style. One of the hymns:

> Stand the omnipotent decree!
> Jehovah's will be done!
> Nature's end we wait to see,
> And hear her final groan;
> Let this earth dissolve, and blend
> In death the wicked and the just,
> Let those ponderous orbs descend,
> And grind us into dust,

is a deliberate paraphrase of a passage in the *Night Thoughts*: **'Night Thoughts'**

> If so decreed, the Almighty Will be done,
> Let earth dissolve, yon pond'rous orbs descend,
> And grind us into dust; the soul is safe;
> The man emerges.

The lines:

> they see
> On earth a bounty not indulged on high,
> And downward look for Heaven's superior praise,

are recalled in the verse:

> Ye seraphs, nearest to the Throne,
> With rapturous amaze,
> On us, poor ransomed worms, *look down*
> *For Heaven's superior praise.*

And the vivid but unfortunate image in the lines:

> Thou who didst save him, snatch the smoking brand
> From out the flames, and quench it in Thy Blood,

is reproduced in many stanzas, such as:

> I want an even strong desire,
> I want a calmly fervent zeal,
> To save poor souls out of the fire,
> To snatch them from the verge of hell,
> And turn them to a pardoning God,
> *And quench the brands in Jesu's blood!*

Young's apostrophe:

> Happy day that breaks our chain!
> That manumits, that calls from exile home,

reappears in a hymn as:

> *O happy, happy day,*
> *That calls Thy exiles home!*
> The heavens shall pass away,
> The earth receive its doom;
> Earth we shall view, and heaven destroyed,
> And shout above the fiery void.

The verse:

> His love, surpassing far
> The love of all beneath,
> We find within our hearts, and dare
> *The pointless darts of death,*

borrows a phrase from Young's line:

> Death's pointless darts, and hell's defeated storms.

The lines:

> the rush of years
> Beats down their strength; their numberless escapes
> In ruin end,

are remembered in a hymn which is a paraphrase of Jer. xxiii. 24:

> *The rush of numerous years bears down*
> *The most gigantic strength of man;*
> And where is all his wisdom gone
> When dust he turns to dust again?

Here Charles Wesley wrote '*beats* down,' and the word was altered to '*bears* down' by John Wesley in his revision.

There are also several recollections in the hymns of Young's *Last Day*. The apostrophe: **'Last Day'**

> Triumphant King of Glory! Soul of bliss!
> What a stupendous turn of fate is this!

is recalled in the hymn for Easter:

> *King of Glory! Soul of bliss!*
> Everlasting life is this,
> Thee to know, Thy power to prove,
> Thus to sing, and thus to love.

And the lines:

> Drive back the tide, suspend a storm in air,
> Arrest the sun, but still of this despair,

are adapted in another hymn, with a mystical sense of which Young was utterly incapable:

Thou my impetuous spirit guide,
And curb my headstrong will;
Thou only canst *drive back the tide,*
And bid the sun stand still

The hymn (the only one on this dread subject included in the *Collection* of 1780):

Terrible thought! shall I *alone,*
Who may be saved, shall I,
Of all, alas! whom I have known,
Through sin for ever die?

is based upon a neighbouring passage in the same poem:

thy wretched self alone
Cast on the left of all whom thou hast known,
How would it wound?

Many other examples of Young's influence might be quoted. Apart from distinct allusions to his lines, he enriched the language of Charles Wesley by favourite phrases, such as 'the starry crown,' 'the mighty void,' and by favourite words such as 'triumph' and 'pomp'—the latter occurring almost as incessantly in Young as in the hymns.

Links with Literature

It is not the least part of the spiritual privilege of Methodists that these magnificent hymns have so many links with literature. Dryden called Ben Jonson 'the great plagiary,' and spoke of 'tracking his footsteps in the snow.' The Wesleys were great plagiarists, in

the same honourable sense, and it has not been an unpleasant or an unfruitful task, we trust, to trace somewhat of their indebtedness, in thought and language, to the great writers of the past. It has been rightly said that one of the great charms of Milton is the 'implicit lore' of his verse—the amount of scholarship that is held in solution in his stately lines. There is a similar charm in the verse of the Wesleys: one is always finding fresh evidence, embedded in the hymns, of their wide reading and exact knowledge. These spiritual songs, like Prospero's isle, are full of echoes.

The Hymns of Methodism are Unique

The hymns of Methodism stand alone, in many respects, in the religious literature of the world. They are unique in their intimate connexion with one of the greatest spiritual movements of history, for the very genius of the Evangelical Revival is in their burning lines: they enshrine what has been well called 'the holy, compassionate, believing spirit of early Methodism.' And, while they constitute the greatest body of devotional verse in the language, they are wholly the work of those astonishing and apostolic men who were not only brothers by blood, but also

> brothers
> In honour, as in one community,
> Scholars and gentlemen.

APPENDICES

I

JOHN WESLEY'S TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GERMAN

THE following is a complete list of John Wesley's translations from the German :

Extended on a cursed tree.
O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben (Gerhardt).

Jesu, Thy boundless love to me.
O Jesu Christ, mein schönstes Licht (Gerhardt).

Commit thou all thy griefs.
Befiehl du deine Wege (Gerhardt).

To Thee with heart and mouth I sing.[1]
Ich singe dir mit Herz und Mund (Gerhardt).

Thee will I love, my strength, my tower.
Ich will dich lieben, meine Stärke (Scheffler).

O God, of good the unfathom'd Sea.
Du unvergleichlich Gut (Scheffler).

Thou, Jesu, art our King.
Dich, Jesu, loben wir (Scheffler).

Jesu, Thy soul renew my own.
Die Seele Christi heil'ge mich (Scheffler).

Thou hidden love of God, whose height.
Verborgne Gottes Liebe du (Tersteegen).

Lo ! God is here, let us adore.
Gott ist gegenwärtig (Tersteegen).

[1] This hymn Wesley never published.

O God, Thou bottomless Abyss.
O Gott, du tiefe sonder Grund (Ernst Lange).

O God, what offering shall I give.
O Jesu, süsses Licht (Joachim Lange).

Jesu, whose glory's streaming rays.
Mein Jesu, dem die Seraphinen (Dessler).

Shall I, for fear of feeble man.
Sollt' ich aus Furcht vor Menschenkindern (Winckler).

Thou Lamb of God, Thou Prince of Peace.
Stilles Lamm und Friedefürst (Richter).

My soul before Thee prostrate lies.
Hier legt mein Sinn sich vor dir nieder (Richter).

O Jesu, source of calm repose.
Wer ist wohl wie du (Freylinghausen).

Monarch of all, with lowly fear.
Monarch aller Ding (Freylinghausen).

Jesu, Thy blood and righteousness.
Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit (Zinzendorf).

O Thou, to whose all-searching sight.
Seelen-Bräutigam, O du Gottes Lamm (Zinzendorf).

Jesu, to Thee my heart I bow.
Reiner Bräut'gam meiner Seele (Zinzendorf).

O God of God, in whom combine.
Herz, der göttlichen Natur (Zinzendorf).

Eternal depth of love divine.
Du ewiger Abgrund der seligen Liebe (Zinzendorf).

O Thou whom sinners love, whose care.
Verliebter in der Sünderschaft (Zinzendorf).

All glory to the Eternal Three.
Schau von deinem Thron (Zinzendorf).

I thirst, Thou wounded Lamb of God.[1]

[1] This hymn is a cento from four German hymns, Zinzendorf's 'Ach, mein verwundter Fürste!' (verses 1–2 of the English), J. Nitschmann's 'Du blutiger Versühner!' (verses 3–6), Zinzendorf's

Now I have found the ground wherein.
Ich habe nun den Grund gefunden (Rothe).

Holy Lamb, who Thee receive.
Du heiliges Kind (Dober).

What shall we offer our good Lord.
Der König ruht and schauet doch (Spangenberg).

Regardless now of things below.
Eins Christen Herz (Maria M. Böhmer).

Meek, patient Lamb of God, to Thee.
O stilles Gottes Lamm (Gottfried Arnold).

O Thou who all things canst control.
Ach, triebe aus meiner Seele (Sigismund Gmelin).

High praise to Thee, all gracious God.
Sei hochgelobt, barmherz'ger Gott (Gotter).

II

QUIETISM AND CALVINISM

There were two movements, more or less within the Methodist Societies, during the lifetime of the Wesleys, that threatened to wreck their work. The first emanated from Molther and the Moravians, the second from Whitefield and his followers.

A perverted Quietism, introduced by Molther, caused the breach with the Moravians, and gave the Wesleys a great deal of trouble for some years afterwards, especially in 1739 and 1740.

Those who came under the spell made much

' Der Gott von unserm Bunde' (verse 7), and Anna Nitschmann's ' Mein König ! deine Liebe' (verse 8). All these four hymns are in the same supplement (*Anhang*) of the Herrnhut *Gesangbuch*.

of the text—the *locus classicus* of Quietism—'Be still, and know that I am God.' 'Stillness' meant to cease from the means of grace, and even from the reading of the Scriptures and prayer, because of the peril of trusting in them. Those who were 'still' would call themselves nothing but 'poor sinners' or 'happy sinners'—greatly to the disgust of honest John Nelson, whose robust common sense held 'the poor sinnership' in hearty contempt. Two passages from Charles Wesley's *Journal* for April, 1740, will sufficiently illustrate the situation and the peril. 'April 8: I got home, weary, wounded, bruised, and faint, through the contradiction of sinners; *poor* sinners, as they call themselves, these heady, violent, fierce contenders for stillness. I could not bear the thought of meeting them again.' 'April 25: Many here (in London) insist that a part of their Christian calling is liberty *from* obeying, not liberty *to* obey. The unjustified, say they, are *to be still*: that is, not to search the Scriptures, not to pray, not to communicate, not to do good, not to endeavour, not to desire: for it is impossible to use means without trusting in them. Their practice is agreeable to their principles. Lazy and proud themselves, bitter and censorious toward others, they trample upon the ordinances and despise the commands of Christ.'

There are many allusions to 'stillness' in the hymns. One is headed 'The True Stillness':

Still for Thy loving kindness, Lord,
I in Thy Temple wait:
I look to find Thee in Thy word,
Or at Thy table meet.
Here in Thine own appointed ways
I wait to learn Thy will;
Silent I stand before Thy face,
And hear Thee say, 'Be still!'
'Be still, and know that I am God!'
'Tis all I live to know!
To feel the virtue of Thy blood,
And spread its praise below!

Another hymn has the lines,

Place no longer let us give
To the old Tempter's will:
Never more our duty leave,
While Satan cries, 'Be still!'
Stand we in the ancient way,
And here with God ourselves acquaint:
Pray we, every moment pray,
And never, never faint.

Another hymn is a lament over those who had lapsed into 'stillness':

Whom still we love with grief and pain,
And weep for their return in vain.

In vain, till Thou the power bestow,
The double power of quickening grace!
And make the *happy sinners* know
Their Tempter, with his angel face;
Who leads them captive at his will,
Captive—but *happy sinners* still!

Another is entitled ' A Poor Sinner ' :

I would be truly still,
 Nor set a time to Thee,
But act according to Thy will,
 And speak, and think, and be.

I would with Thee be one ;
 And till the grace is given,
Incessant pray, Thy will be done,
 In earth as 'tis in heaven.

The other movement was the Calvinistic propaganda. Many of the hymns of Methodism reflect the life-long controversy of the Wesleys with the Calvinists.

It was undoubtedly these great hymns that were largely accountable for the diffusion of Arminian doctrine throughout evangelical Christendom. In this respect they mark a theological epoch. For the work of the Wesleys was the death of Calvinism, or at least of its baser nature.

The Calvinism that survives in the world to-day is a thing refined, rarefied. The baser sort of Calvinism is so utterly extinct in our days—thanks to Methodism—that it is difficult for us to realize that it ever existed. The sublimated spirit of Calvinism that lives in the modern representatives of the Reformed Churches we can admire greatly. The deep sense of the sinfulness of sin, the profound apprehension of grace as utterly and unutterably

undeserved, the humility and the reverence which attend upon these thoughts—all these are spiritual characteristics for which we cannot be too thankful. And we could willingly detect more of all these notes in modern religion.

There, indeed, lies at once the source and the strength of all that is best in Calvinism. The doctrine of Calvin is the doctrine of Augustine, extended to its relentless issue, and it is in the religious experience of Augustine that we must seek the germ of his doctrine. It was Augustine's deep conviction of sin and his sense of absolute helplessness apart from the overmastering and overwhelming grace of God—it was this, passing into his writings, and, after many centuries, developed with pitiless logic, by a mind much more formal and much less subtle than his, which became Calvinism. At this time of day we can afford to recognize that the noble source of the doctrinal perversion was nothing less than that deep instinct of the Christian soul which is expressed in the language of Toplady:

> *Nothing* in my hand I bring,
> Simply to Thy Cross I cling!

This is the better side: there was a worse. There is plentiful evidence of that in the early literature of Methodism. Charles Wesley once quoted from Calvin's *Institutes* (l. iii. c. 24) a frightful passage concerning the reprobate, 'God speaketh to them that they may be the

deafer: He gives light to them that they may be the blinder; He offers instruction to them that they may be the more ignorant; and uses the remedy that they may *not* be healed.' And elsewhere the poet of Methodism records that during his exposition of a controverted passage of Scripture at Bristol one of his hearers '*even called for damnation upon his own soul if Christ died for all, and if God was willing THAT ALL MEN SHOULD BE SAVED.*' This was the faith, and this the temper of eighteenth-century Calvinism. And this was where the early Methodists joined issue with the 'doctrines of grace.' What the Wesleys contended for was a universal gospel; what they denied vehemently was that doctrine of election which, as John Wesley said, amounted to this: 'One in twenty (suppose) of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can.'

It is characteristic that the reasons for which the Wesleys opposed Calvinism were all practical reasons. It disturbed the peace of the Societies, and they were forced to fight it for the sake of peace. It appeared amongst the early Methodists as an alien propaganda, and it had to be encountered. Then it led undoubtedly to serious laxity of conduct: the Antinomian peril was very real in the early days of Methodism, and it was largely the result of Predestinarian doctrine.

Antinomianism was not then the mere ghost of dead heresy or the bold paradox of exalted piet sm, but a hideous danger, which the Wesleys met everywhere. And then the doctrinal grounds of opposition were also practical. Neither of the Wesleys had much interest in speculative theology. But they preached an illimitable salvation ; they denied that there was any limit whatever to the gospel, except such as was set by the unwillingness of men to accept salvation. They taught that the forgiving love of God was boundless.

The literature of the controversy between Methodism and Calvinism is to-day largely forgotten. It is as well so. The pamphlets and sermons of 1740 and 1770, the publicat ons of Wesley, Fletcher, and Olivers on the one side, and of Whitefield, Toplady, and Sir Richard Hill on the other, have only an antiquarian interest. All that really survives to-day from that remote contest is a batch of hymns—Toplady's ' Rock of Ages ! cleft for me,' and many of the stirring stanzas that Charles Wesley wrote at the time. Several of these familiar hymns, indeed, can scarcely be understood as they ought unless we remember the implicit protest against a limited gospel which they contain.

> *The world* He suffered to redeem ;
> For *all* He hath the atonement made :
> For *those that will not come to Him*
> The ransom of His life was paid !

O for a trumpet voice
 On *all the world* to call!
To bid their hearts rejoice
 In Him who died for *all!*
For *all* my Lord was crucified,
For *all*, for *all* my Saviour died!

O let Thy love my heart constrain,
 Thy love for *every* sinner free,
That *every* fallen soul of man
 May taste the grace that found out me;
That *all mankind* with me may prove
Thy sovereign, everlasting love.

But if it be asked where in these hymns of controversy Charles Wesley's most effective protest against the doctrine of Calvin is to be found, there can be little doubt, we think, that it is in precisely those lines which express the deepest depth of humility, the lines in which he writes of the grace of God:

Throughout the world its breadth is known,
 Wide as infinity!
So wide, it never passed by one,
 Or it had passed by me.

III

ARCHAISMS IN THE HYMNS

The style of Wesley's hymns is distinctly the most modern poetical style of the period. There are, however, a few archaisms, all of which are dealt with, we believe, in the following notes.

In the examples from the hymns, the numbers given are those of the *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists* (1780).

1. Words Used with an Obsolete Pronunciation.

Acceptable

Thou our sacrifice receive,
Acceptable through Thy Son. Hy. 415–1.

The older pronunciation, as in Milton :

Thy perfect gift, so good,
So fit, so *acceptable*, so divine.
(*Paradise Lost*, X., 139.)

Cemented

Cemented by love divine,
Seal our souls for ever Thine ! 498–1.

The older pronunciation, as in Shakespeare :

The fear of us
May *cement* their divisions, and bind up
The petty difference.
(*Antony & Cleopatra*, II., i. 48.)

But this pronunciation was already giving way before Wesley's time. Witness the lines of Swift, in the *City Shower* (1710) :

Sole coat ! where dust *cemented* by the rain,
Erects the nap, and leaves a cloudy stain !

CONFESSOR

His friends and *confessors* to own,
And seat us on our glorious throne. 471–5.

This is the historical pronunciation, which did not give way until the beginning of the nineteenth century. After this, for a while, both pronunciations were current, and there was an attempt to distinguish the two senses of the word by the differing accents—confessor, one who witnesses for religion in the face of danger—the meaning of the word in the hymn—confessor, one who makes or receives confession of a fault.

But Wesley's pronunciation was universal up to his time, and for years after. So in Dryden (using the word in the second sense):

For sundry years before did he complain,
And told his ghostly *confessor* his pain.
(*Hind and Panther*, III., 210.)

OBDURATE

Give the sweet relenting grace,
Soften this *obdurate* stone! 98–1.

The older pronunciation, as always in Shakespeare and Milton:

His baleful eyes,
That witnessed huge affliction and dismay,
Mixed with *obdurate* pride and steadfast hate.
(*Paradise Lost*, I., 58.)

Sŭccessor

Where shall I wander now to find,
The *successors* they left behind?

The older pronunciation, as in Dryden:

I here declare you rightful *successor*,
And heir immediate to my crown.
(*Secret Love*, V., 1.)

2. Words Used in an Obsolete Sense.

Prevent

He *prevents* His creatures' call,
Kind and merciful to all. 228–1.

This, of course, is the old and primary sense of the word, as in the collect:

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour.

And in Izaak Walton, who records that he rose early to go fishing, '*preventing* the sunrise.'

Propriety

Whate'er I have was freely given;
Nothing but sin I call my own;
Other *propriety* disclaim.
Thou only art the great I AM. 323–4.

This is the Latin sense of the word—what we

mean now by 'property, proprietorship.' So, in Milton:

> Hail, wedded Love, mysterious law, true source
> Of human offspring, sole *propriety*
> In Paradise of all things common else!
> (*Paradise Lost*, IV., 750.)

RESENT

> My inmost bowels shall *resent*
> The yearnings of Thy dying love. 24–14.

When the word was first introduced into the language, in the seventeenth century, it simply meant, as the French *ressentir* still does, to feel —'to have a sense or feeling of that which had been done to us, but whether a sense of gratitude for the good, or of enmity for the evil, the word said nothing' (Trench, *Select Glossary*, p. 186). It was only gradually that the sense of the word was narrowed to express angry feeling alone.

The earlier and wider significance of the word (as in the hymn) is seen in these examples:

> It was mighty well *resented* and approved of.
> (Pepys' *Diary*, 13th February, 1669.)

> 'Tis by my touch alone that you *resent*
> What objects yield delight, what discontent.
> (Beaumont, *Psyche* IV., 156.)

UNITARIAN

> The *Unitarian* fiend expel,
> And chase his doctrine back to hell. 431–3

Remarks have often been ignorantly made on the bitter intolerance of these lines, which many have understood as referring to the teaching of those whom we now call Unitarians. The fact is, of course, that they refer solely to Mahometanism. The hymn is headed, in the *Collection* of 1780, 'For the Mahometans' (in the pamphlet in which it was originally published, 'For the Turks'), and it is full of specific allusions to Mahomet, 'That Arab-thief, as Satan bold, Who quite destroyed Thine Asian fold.' The use of 'Unitarian' in reference to Moslem doctrine is quite correct, and, in the eighteenth century, was quite common. Gibbon, in describing the rise of Islam, refers again and again to the march of the *Unitarian* armies, the advance of the *Unitarian* banners. Those Christians who deny the Divinity of Christ were always called Socinians in Wesley's time; it was only at the end of the eighteenth century that they began to be generally called Unitarians. Indeed the next hymn but one to this in the *Hymns of Intercession for all Mankind* (1758), is entitled 'For the Arians, Socinians, Deists, Pelagians, &c.'

3. Obsolete Grammatical Usage.

There is one grammatical archaism which frequently recurs in the hymns—the use of the Preterite for the Passive Participle, as in :

The Sun of Righteousness on me
Hath *rose* with healing in his wings. 136–10.

Holiness unto the Lord,
Still be *wrote* upon our heart. 415–2.

and innumerable other examples.

Wesley, in his *Short English Grammar*, published in 1748, gives 'rose' and 'strove' as being both the Imperfect and the Passive Participle of 'rise' and 'strive.' He gives 'writ' or 'wrote' as the Imperfect, and 'written' as the Participle of 'write.'

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1758 there is a witty poem by Dr. Byrom, *The Passive Participle's Petition*:

Till just of late, good English has thought fit
To call me *written*, or to call me *writ*;
But what is writ or written, by the vote
Of writers now, hereafter must be *wrote*,
And what is spoken, too, hereafter *spoke*,
And measures never to be *broken*, *broke*.

I never could be *driven*, but in spite
Of Grammar, they have *drove* me from my right.
None could have *risen*, to become my foes;
But what a world of enemies have *rose!*
Who have not *gone*, but they have *went* about,
And, *torn* as I have been, have *tore* me out.

The poem, which was probably suggested by *The Humble Petition of Who and Which*, in the *Spectator*, ends with the appeal:

Let all the learned take some better heed,
And leave the vulgar to confound the due
Of preter sense, and participle too.

Dr. Lowth also protested against this usage, and declared: 'This abuse has been long growing upon us, and is continually making further encroachments.' On the other hand, Horne Tooke, in the *Diversions of Purley* (1786), maintained that it was not a growing usage, but one which had greatly decreased; that it was not an innovation, but 'the idiom of the language'; and that examples of it might be given 'from every writer in the English tongue.' The pioneer of English philology was right. Byrom was mistaken in thinking the usage of recent introduction. It occurs more or less in all English writers until the middle of the eighteenth century. So Shakespeare, where Queen Katherine says in *Henry VIII* (ii. 4, 30):

> Or which of your friends
> Have I not *strove* to love, although I knew
> He were mine enemy?

and where Edmund says in *King Lear* (i. 2, 93):

> I dare pawn down my life for him, that he hath *wrote* this to feel my affection to your honour.

And often in Dryden:

> I made a sacred and a solemn vow
> To offer up the prisoners that were *took*.
> (*Indian Queen*, II., 1.)

Nevertheless, we have a strong impression that the practice of using the Preterite instead of the Participle was commoner in the early eighteenth century than it had ever been before,

and we would suggest that this was because the age had become sensitive to the confusion, and was endeavouring to reach a consistent usage—either by making the Preterite regularly serve instead of the Participle, as the Wesleys did, or by distinguishing regularly between them—the usage which finally prevailed. Lowth and Byrom felt that the use of the Preterite for the Participle was becoming more common, as in some writers it probably was, through an effort after consistency, and they concluded that it was a new abuse, which it was not.

And, finally, there is the use of 'rent' for 'rend':

> My stony heart Thy voice shall *rent*,
> Thou wilt, I trust, the veil remove. 24–14.

John Wesley, in his *Short English Grammar*, gives 'rend' as the Present Tense, and 'rent' as the Imperfect; but Charles Wesley, in the hymns, consistently used 'rent' as the Present Tense of the verb. There is warrant for it in earlier writers, as in Shakespeare:

> And will you *rent* our ancient love asunder
> To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
> (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii., 2, 215.)

And in George Herbert:

> Better by worms be all once spent,
> Than to have hellish moths still gnaw and fret
> Thy name in books, which may not *rent*.
> (*Content*, 43.

'Rent' as the Present Tense occurred in several passages of the Authorized Version of the Bible, but it has been altered in later editions in every case but one (Jer. iv. 30).

'Rend' and 'rent' would appear to have been used indifferently for the Present Tense—as they are in Shakespeare—until nearly Wesley's time.

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